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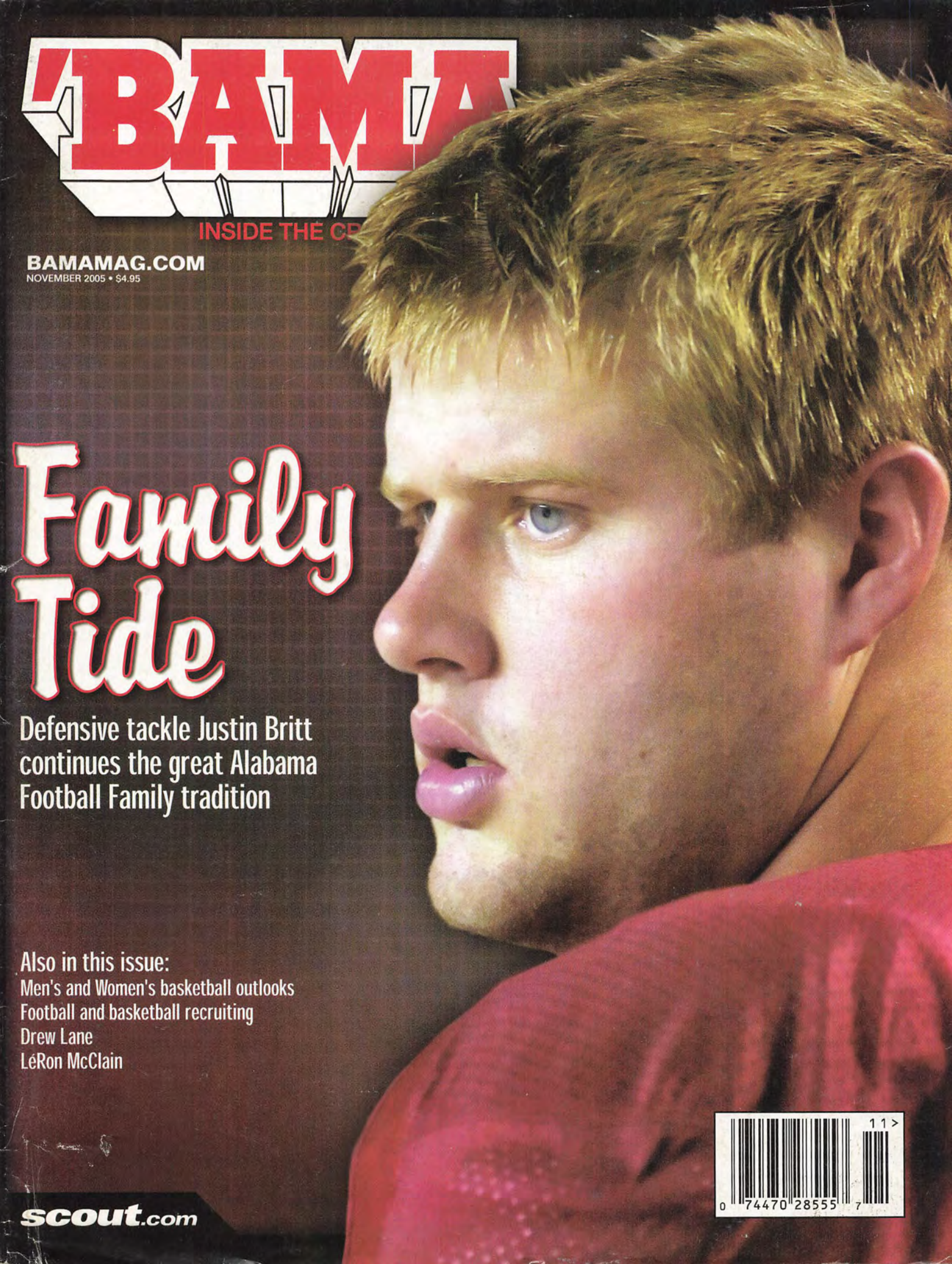

# Family Tide

Defensive tackle Justin Britt continues the great Alabama Football Family tradition

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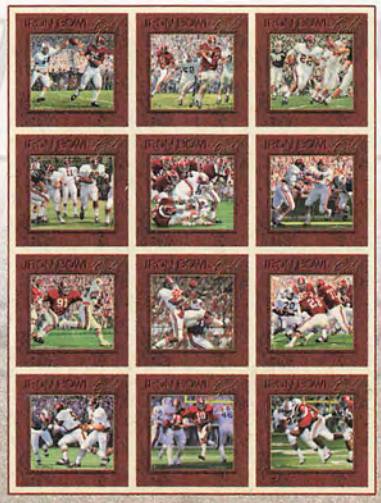

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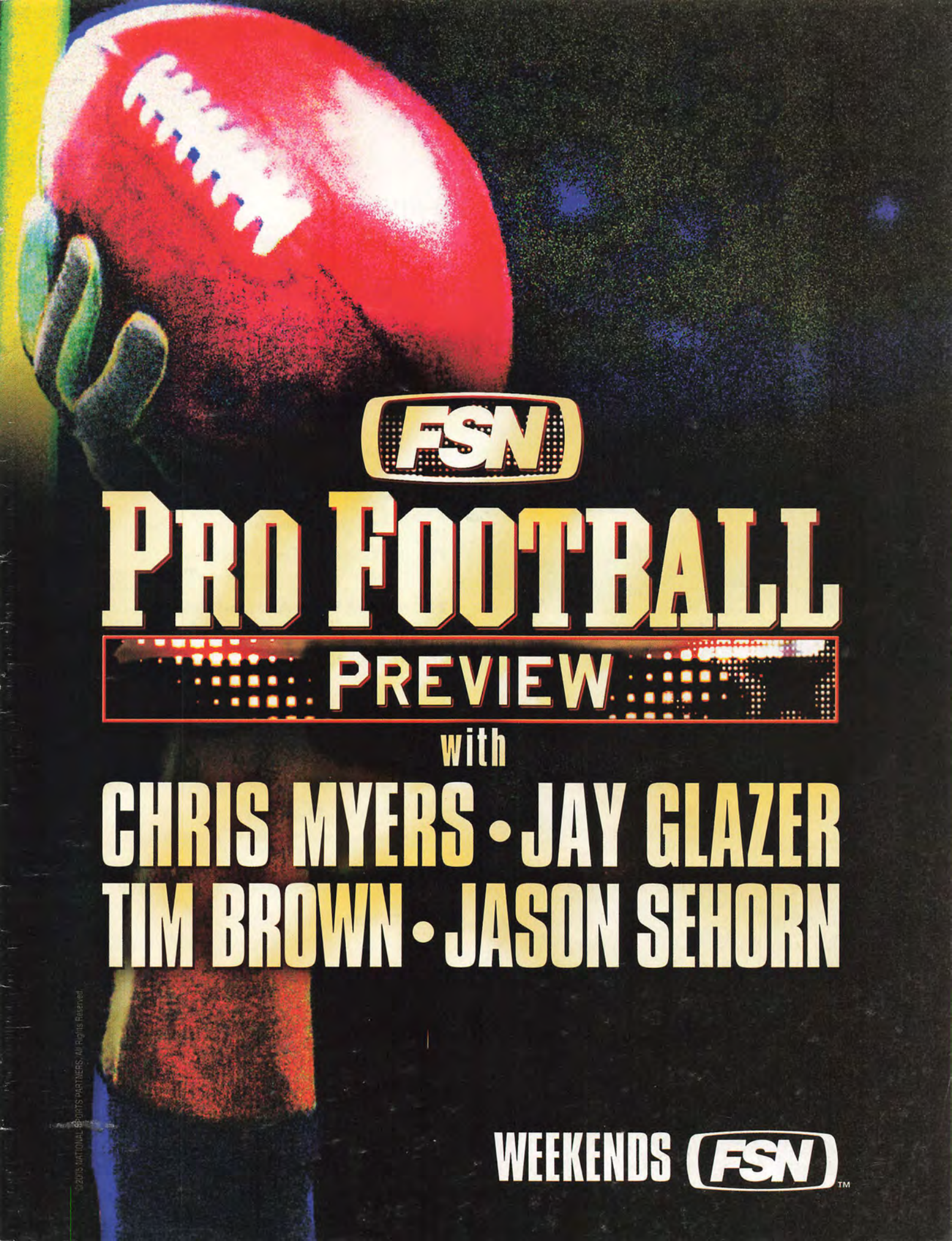
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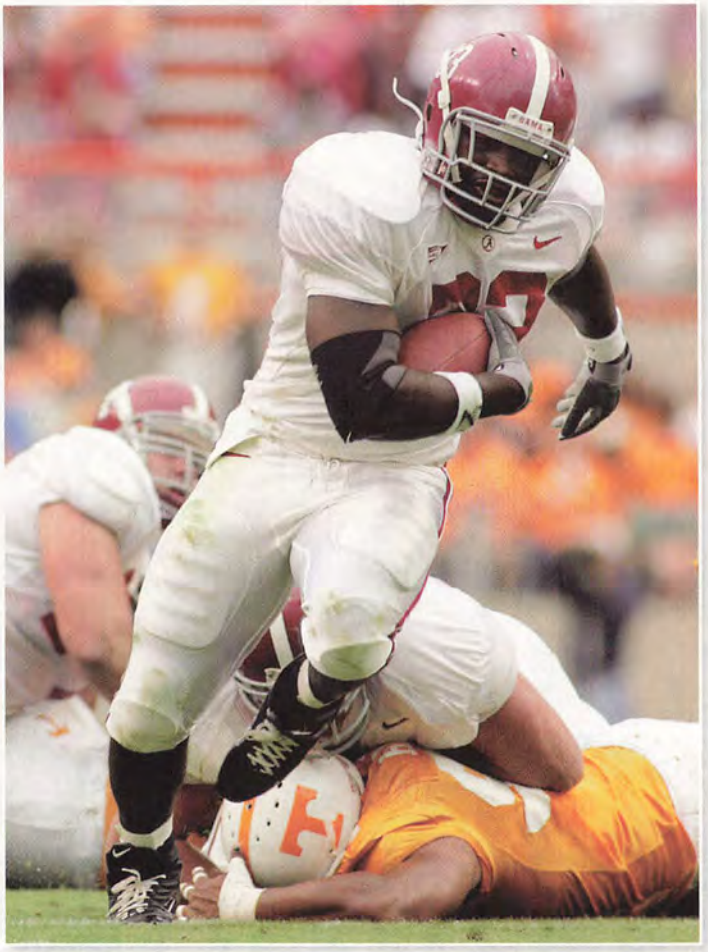

Cover Photo of Justin Britt by Barry Fikes
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'BAMA
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

November 2005 • Volume 27, Issue Nine

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# *Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,*

September 10 was a big day in Alabama football. That was the day of "The Catch," the miraculous reception made by Tyrone Prothro in the final moments of the first half against Southern Mississippi. Everyone has seen it. On a fourth-and-12 from the Alabama 43 and Bama trailing the Golden Eagles by 21-10, Brodie Croyle lofted a pass down the middle. The defender got between Prothro and the ball, but Prothro reached around the defender (who was flagged for pass interference) and squeezed the ball against the defender's back. And Prothro held on. Replay officials got the call right, ball down at the Southern Miss one-yard line. And from there the Tide got a touchdown to pull within 21-17 and Bama rolled in the second half to a 30-21 victory.

Observers agreed the play turned that game around, and may have turned Alabama's season in the right direction.

Something else happened that day. Howard Chappell died on the morning of September 10, 2005. I never met Howard Chappell, but I had a delightful conversation with him when I interviewed him for the book, "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide." Coach Chap as he was known was Alabama's oldest living football player, 94 at the time of our conversation last winter and was 95 last July 9.

He had been signed by Coach Wallace Wade, played for Coach Frank Thomas, and was a teammate of many Bama stars of yesteryear, including Paul Bryant.

As a player, Chappel did something that not even Tyrone Prothro is likely to do. In 1932 Alabama and Tennessee played a remarkable football game in a driving rainstorm in Birmingham. Johnny Cain punted for Alabama. And punted, and punted. A total of 19 times for a 48-yard average. Beattie Feathers was doing the same thing on the other side, punting 21 times. Thomas and Tennessee Coach Robert Neyland were both trying to avoid a mistake. Alabama made one, a dropped snap on a punt attempt that gave the Vols good field position, a touchdown, and a 7-3 win.

And Chappell's accomplishment? He caught 17 of the 21 Feathers' punts.

Coach Chap made his mark in life as the longtime head football coach at Deshler High School in Tuscumbia. The field is named for him. In the book he confessed to being an offensive coach who was able to produce a lot of points. And he said he got some help with the defense, calling his old teammate, Bryant, to come up and lend a hand.

In the book, Chappell said, "My wife was a student of football. Once she said, 'Howard, your team doesn't play defense as well as it should.' I said, 'I'm not Bear Bryant. I'm not a defensive coach. I'm offensive.' She said, 'You sure are.' "

As all of the 62 players in the book (as well as Coach Gene Stallings, who wrote the foreword, I heard things from Coach Chap I had never heard before. But I didn't hear everything he had to say. I suppose I had overstayed my time with him on the telephone when he abruptly (though pleasantly) ended our conversation with, "Well, okay. Good bye." Click.

And one of the thing he hadn't told me was that he was the great uncle of former Alabama defensive back Mike Dean (1967-69). It was Mike who called me with the news of Coach Chap's death.

I had a selfish little goal to have all of the subjects in "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide" to autograph the picture with the article on him. My plan was to have two such books, one for each of my children. I didn't think it would be particularly valuable, but that wasn't the purpose.

I had been scheduled to speak to the Lauderdale County Alumni Association in Florence on Monday, August 29. My plan was to leave an hour or so early, drive over to Tuscumbia, meet Coach Chap and get his autographs. That was the day Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, and the bad weather resulted in cancellation of my trip.

In the grand scheme of things, me missing out on an autograph is miniscule compared to the misery Katrina dealt so many. But what I really missed out on was a chance to meet Coach Chap, and I am sorry for that.

I don't know if he read, "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide." If he did, I don't know if he was satisfied with his article. I certainly hope it pleased him, because one of the most gratifying aspects of having written the book is the response I have heard from the players. ■

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair

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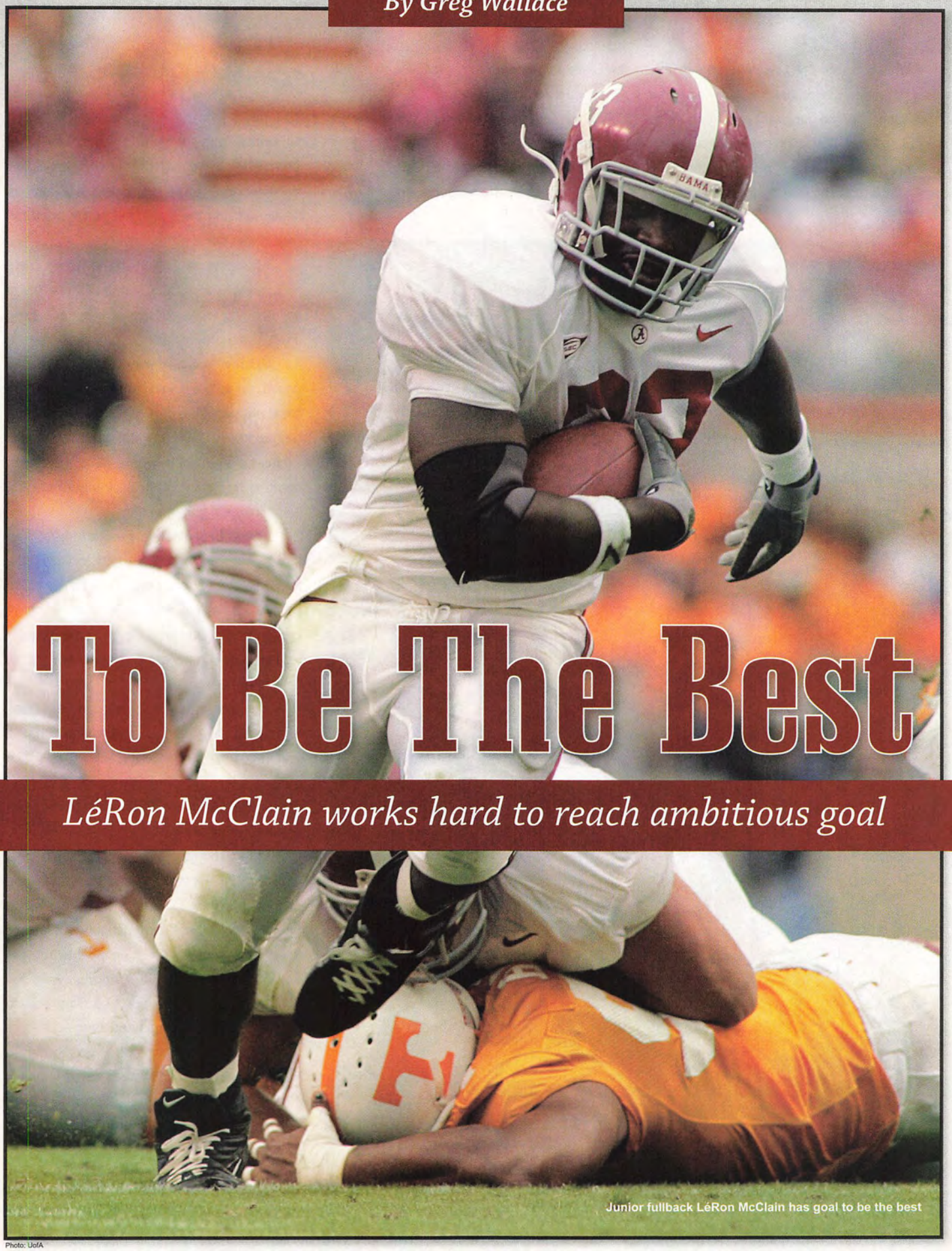
By Greg Wallace

# To Be The Best

## LéRon McClain works hard to reach ambitious goal



Junior fullback LéRon McClain has goal to be the best

Photo: UofA

Before each 6:30 a.m. workout this summer, LéRon McClain paused at the door of The University of Alabama's weight room. The Crimson Tide's junior fullback had a simple mantra, one that represented what he was trying to accomplish. McClain said, "I said to myself, 'Be the best.' Those are the words I live by."

The best fullback in the Southeastern Conference.

The best fullback in America.

Those are McClain's goals, and following a strong start to his junior year, he appears well on the way to reaching them. One of the nation's top fullback prospects when he signed with Alabama out of Tuscaloosa County High School three years ago, the sturdily-built, tough-as-nails McClain is finally fulfilling the hype that surrounded his prodigious backfield talents.

After long, hard work sculpting his body and losing weight, McClain is on track for a solid ending to his college career, and a long career as a pro fullback.

Sparky Woods, the Tide's running backs coach, said, "He went and just got himself in great physical shape; he's got the experience he had from playing the last three years; and I think he's gotten to where he continues to improve. I don't think he's changed much. I just think he's gotten better."

Those expectations seemed far-fetched three years ago. McClain had to wait for a qualifying test score before starting practice with Alabama. He had, in his words, "fresh legs," but McClain was out of shape and far less prepared than he could have been for his freshman season.

He played as a freshman, but was hampered by injuries and made only a minimal impact, playing 180 snaps but getting only one carry (for one yard) and making two catches for 35 yards, all coming against Kentucky.

With an off-season of conditioning behind him, McClain improved markedly last year, starting the final four games of the season after fellow fullback Tim Castille tore up his knee and scoring six touchdowns on the season. He had a good spring, winning the Johnny Musso Most Improved Back Award as selected by the Bama coaching staff.

But he was determined to do more, and that started by getting in even better shape.

McClain began last season at 6-foot-1, 256 pounds, and played most of the year between 246 and 250 pounds. That, he knew, had to change, and the remedy was daily 6:30 a.m. workouts.

*continued on page 22*

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*By Mitch Dobbs*

# Blue Collar Snapper

## *Lane would like to stay anonymous...and perfect*

Drew Lane wants to keep anonymity and by being mistake-free

Photo: UofA

By the time you read this story about the perfection of Drew Lane's long snapping on punts and placement kicks in his two years with the Alabama football team, it could all be elementary. Something bad could happen at any time.

Most long streaks come to an end, after all. Lane presumably errs in everyday life as we all do, and his margin for football error is thin. If a quarterback completed 90 percent of his passes he would be heralded as the best passer in history; but a long snapper with a 90 percent good-snap rate would be tossed out on his ear.

For Lane to stay on the favored side of his coaches, teammates, and Alabama football fans, he needs a success rate more like that of a pilot landing an airplane safely, or a surgeon operating successfully on a patient. Lane is easily in the 99.99-plus percentile range for his snapping career.

Lane hasn't erred in his snapping duties yet as a member of the Alabama football team. He shored up an area of the Crimson Tide's special teams that was wandering aimlessly after the departure of four-year starter Nick Ridings following the 2003 season.

We're betting this story will not self-destruct in 15 seconds like one of those secret messages on Mission Impossible. Far from being impossible to forecast, Lane's snapping has become about as predictable as the changing phases of the moon and the Sun's rise in the east every 24 hours or so.

Lane has literally made his snapping

second nature.

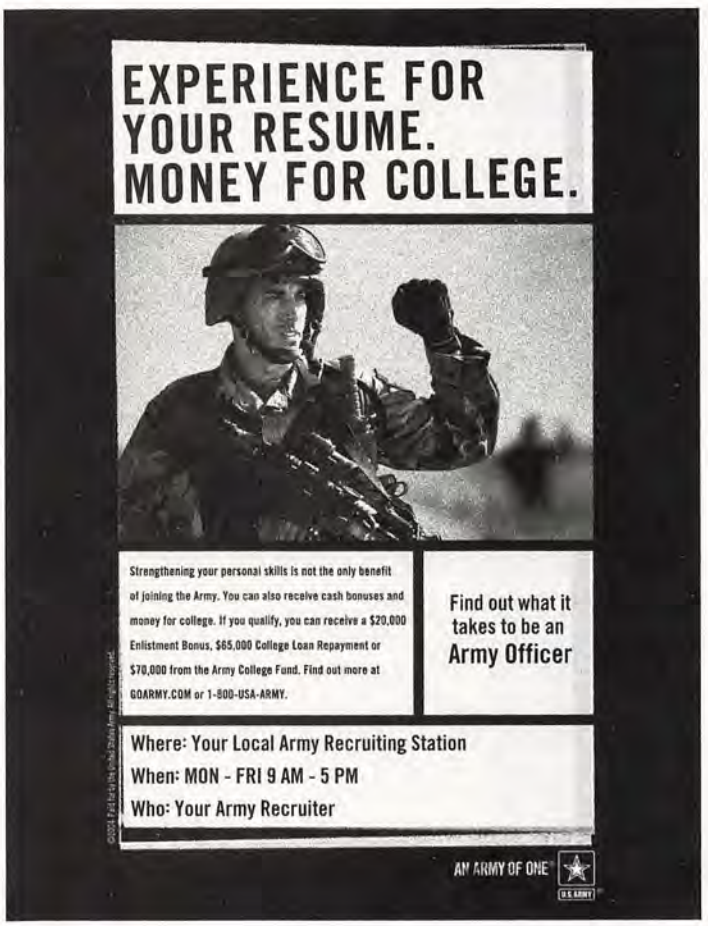
"When you get out there always try to think of something else–nothing really," he said. "You want to look at your blocking assignments in front of you but you never really want to think about the snap itself. By that time it should be automatic."

The 6-1, 230-pound transfer from Hinds (Mississippi) Junior College has a streak dating back to last century, when he was a 10th-grader at Richland High School a few miles south of Jackson, Mississippi, just off highway 49 where his mom was a teacher.

"I remember the first time I had a bad snap," Lane said. "It stuck with me. I said 'I'm not ever going to let that happen again.'"

And it hasn't happened again, yet. Not in 11th or 12th grade, not in two years at Hinds and not at Alabama. The good snaps have all looked a lot alike, but it's the one high snap he made in 10th grade, Lane said, that some folks back home choose to remember and question him about.

"Even when I go back to Richland it somehow kind of haunts me a little bit," he said. "I went over and talked to my high school coaches and they go 'You remember when you snapped that ball high over our punter?' Yeah I remember that. The only time I've ever snapped a bad one and there they are remembering it. You snap a million snaps in a game and that one snap can really do you in."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Since he began snapping his goal was to become a snapper in the Southeastern Conference. Lane grew up a Mississippi State fan, but the Bulldogs had an established snapper. So did in-state Ole Miss. Instead of schools recruiting him, Lane had to do a selling job just to land a spot as a walk-on. It was the spring of 2004 when Lane began analyzing the snapping situation at Alabama.

Walk-on David Sears did some snapping in the spring, but later left the team. Defensive tackle Dominic Lee tried to snap, too, but he was inconsistent.

"I knew that Nick Riding was leaving and it was a spot to be filled," Lane said. "I sent (special teams coordinator) Coach (Dave) Ungerer a tape and he contacted me shortly afterwards and told me the situation. I came and visited and we kind of hit it off."

Consistency is a buzzword for Alabama Head Coach Mike Shula, and there's not a better word to describe Lane. It's what won and has kept Lane the long snapping job at Alabama.

He started as an undersized offensive lineman weighing 170 pounds in high school and taught himself how to snap. "They needed someone brave enough to do it," he said. "Our starters never got hurt so they threw me in there and I just kind of picked up things on my own."

"I bought a video. But I just got out there with my friend in high school and just snapped and snapped and snapped until I felt I was comfortable. Then I would do it some more. I'm just kind of a blue collar guy, I guess."

A few snaps in the right spot haven't garnered much daily attention in the newspapers, television, or on the campus of The University, as so many things football have.

"Unh-uh. No," Lane responded, asked if he ever gets recognized as being a football player. He said that many of his conversations follow a similar pattern.

"I'll introduce myself and they will never know who I am," Lane said. "I tell them I play football and tell them my name. They say, 'I've never heard of you. What position do you play?'

"I say, 'long snapper.'

"'What is that?'

"'Well, I snap the ball to the punter.' - and they just kind of look at me," he said.

Lane has such a nondescript face and quiet personality that Ungerer felt obligated to reintroduce Lane to the rest of his team during fall camp.

"I wanted all of our guys to meet their long snapper," Ungerer said.

Alabama safety Roman Harper said Ungerer has introduced Lane to the team, "a couple of times."

"He just makes Drew stand up and makes sure we know who he is so we talk to him," Harper said. "You really wouldn't notice Drew. He does his little thing and he doesn't talk to anybody. He hangs out with (punter) Jeremy Schatz all day. That's all he does."

After Lane left the room where the interview for this story took place

*continued on page 23*

*By Mitch Dobbs*

# Highly-Ranked Amateur

## *Tide freshman was outstanding in major golf event*

Before becoming an official member of the University of Alabama golf team, Montgomery native Matthew Swan made the most out of his first summer as a Trinity Presbyterian School graduate, leading a wave of Crimson Tide players to the United States Amateur golf championships in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, just a couple months after graduating high school.

Swan came up short of matching former Tide golfer Jerry Pate's 1974 feat of winning the Amateur (Pate still holds the distinction of being the only Alabama player to win the event), but Swan put on quite a show in late August of this year, downing the world's second-ranked amateur and a current Alabama teammate in the match-play competition. That Bama vs. Bama round brought a lot of attention to the emerging golf program at The Capstone.

Just qualifying for the U.S. Amateur is no easy matter, but it was the second Amateur appearance for Swan. He qualified at Ol' Colony, the Tide's home facility. He was one of some 8,000 who had hopes of making golf's most prestigious 312-person amateur field. Sophomore Crimson Tide players Joseph Sykora and Mark Harrell as well as 2005 senior Clint Provost joined Swan in qualifying for the main event in Pennsylvania.

Swan almost missed the match-play side of the event that he eventually performed so well in. The 312-man field had to be narrowed down into a 64-man match play event with two rounds of medal, or stroke, play, and Swan was in a playoff to get into the match play field the morning before match play began.

(Medal play is based on overall score for the duration of the competition. In an 18-hole medal, or stroke, play match, a 72 would beat a 73. Match play is determined by holes won. It is typical for a match to end in something like 3-and-2, meaning one player has won three more holes than the other with only two holes to play.)

After grinding out a match play spot, however, Swan had the misfortune of doing the one thing Alabama Coach Jay Seawell hoped against. The players who qualified in the morning playoff were paired for first round matches by drawing. Sykora was among the players already in the match play field waiting to see whom he would play, and Seawell didn't want to see his two remaining pupils have to face each other in the first round of match play.

"He told me not to draw Joseph, but I ended up drawing the seed that was playing him in the first round," Swan said. "I wasn't too happy."

"They normally do the drawings the night before, but because of the playoff they drew that morning. As soon as I got done (with the playoff) I knew we were playing each other."

Sykora made the Amateur for the first time in three attempts this year and was waiting to see who he would play after moving through the stroke play event with scores of 69-72, which tied him for fifth place in the first two days of play.

Seawell might not have wanted two of his players to face each other in the first round of match play, but there were some unintended consequences that worked out well for The University. For instance, The Golf Channel might have been confused with Crimson Tide Sports network for the time the two were playing.

"It was an agonizing day because I knew someone was going to lose," Seawell said. "I knew each one of our guys there had the dream of winning the U.S. Amateur, so you knew that one of them would be disappointed."

The match didn't disappoint television producers, either. Swan took the first two holes of the match, but Sykora stabilized himself and held Swan to the two hole advantage as they made the ninth-hole turn.

"It stayed like that for a while. He won some holes in the middle of the round and got it going back and fourth where I'd win a hole to go two-up (a two-hole advantage) and he'd win one to get it back to one-up (one hole lead)," Swan said.

Swan took a two-hole lead onto the 260-yard 17th- par-three hole, needing simply to tie Sykora's score in one of the two remaining holes to win the match. Both Tide players hit excellent tee shots, but Swan's 15-foot putt lipped out while Sykora sunk a 10-footer to take the match to the final hole.

The 18th proved to be the pivotal one in the match as Skykora's tee shot went left, forcing a second that left him blocked from getting near the hole. Swan's second shot from just off the right-side fairway was fair, and he chipped up close enough for Sykora to concede the par, and thus the match. Swan took the match, two up.

"It was a great day for University of Alabama golf," Seawell said after the match. "It was center stage. I am very proud of how all our golfers represented us here."

The Golf Channel followed the Crimson Tide teammates through their match against one another closely and interviewed the two players afterwards.

"The lady from the Golf Channel interviewed us and he (Sykora) embarrassed me by saying nice stuff about me," Swan said. "I didn't need all that. Joseph's just the nicest guy you could ever meet. The whole round we talked. Coming down the stretch we didn't say too much, but we talked

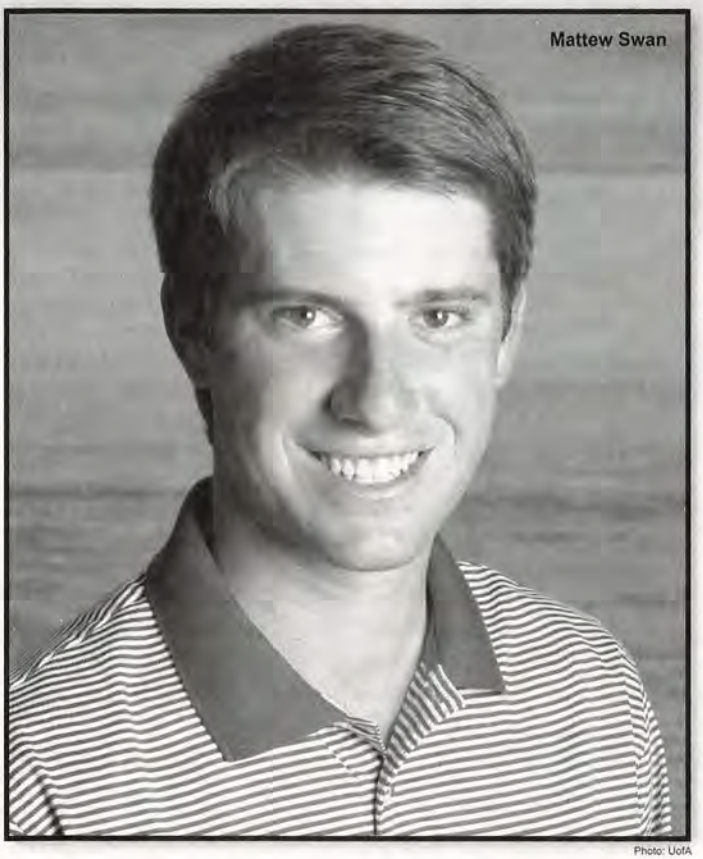

Photo: UofA

the whole round. That definitely helped the golf team. Us playing each other was kind of odd, but that helped people notice Alabama."

After dispensing of his Alabama teammate, Swan had the daunting task of playing the second-ranked amateur in the world, Michael Sim. Swan never trailed his match against Sim, leading one up through the first four holes and two up after nine holes. Sim squared the match several times, including after holes 17 and 18. Swan defeated the Australian one-up on the 19th hole after sinking putts of 15 and 12 feet on 17 and 18 to extend the match.

Swan's run at the Amateur finally ended that afternoon when he faced eventual U.S. Amateur champion Italian Edoardo Molinari in the round of 16.

"The guy was just too good to beat," Seawell said after the match.

Molinari swiped the lead in the match from Swan on the first hole and never trailed. Swan relented on the 16th hole and Molinari took the match three-and-two.

As Sykora and Swan returned to Tuscaloosa to begin classes, Molinari went on to became the first European to win the U.S. Amateur since 1911 when he made a 25-foot birdie putt on the 33rd hole (of 36) to beat Dillon Dougherty of Woodland, California.

While the winner earned exemptions into the Master's and U.S. Open, Seawell possibly felt like the next biggest winner in the amateur after watching his players' achievements in Pennsylvania.

"I'm really excited for those guys and I'm excited for the future of University of Alabama golf," he said. And he should be. ■

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By Mitch Dobbs

# Works In Progress

## *Men's and women's golf programs are building*

All around The University of Alabama there is evidence of building. New athletics facilities. New dormitories. Parking garages and academic buildings. And there is building going on in the Crimson Tide's golf programs, too. On the men's side, the building may be pretty far along. For the women, it is just beginning.

Even with three 2005 United States Amateur participants dotting the Alabama men's lineup, fourth year Crimson Tide Head Coach Jay Seawell is looking for more weapons as his University of Alabama golf team readies for the 2005-06 season.

The fall season began in Knoxville, Tennessee, but the spring season is the primary golf season. It's the time when championships are up for grabs.

Alabama men's golf team entered the 2005-06 season ranked 19th in the widely used Golfweek national rankings. The Tide finished last season ranked 24th after advancing to the NCAA team finals for the first time since 1996.

"Golf is a game of confidence. The more confident you are, the better you are," Seawell said. "And when you see golfers play well in the summer, it's usually an omen that they'll have a good college year that year because they do springboard from the summer into the college season because of that added confidence."

Seawell, aided enormously by the athletics department's completion of the state-of-the-art Jerry Pate Golf Center, has been able to recruit golfers he thinks can make Alabama one of the top 15 programs in the nation, and who he hopes will eventually compete for national and Southeastern Conference titles with the likes of Georiga, the defending national champions and winners of the SEC four times since 2000.

"I thought, at the beginning of last season, that we'd be a top 25 program, and we ended up being 22nd and 23rd all year," he said. "I really do think that we have the potential to be a top 15 program this year. I think by the end of the year, with their capabilities and as their experience grows and the team works together, this team could be a top 10 team."

Seawell has reason to be upbeat as he enters his fourth season with a talented team comprised of three seniors, one junior, five sophomores and two freshmen.

"We as a team are committed to today," Seawell said. "We're young and there is a bright future for Alabama golf, but we are really dedicated and our goals are for today. And I think that's the biggest thing we want to come out of this: though we are young, we are good enough and I think

Jay Seawell Mic Potter

Photo: UofA

experienced enough to do some things today."

As a true freshman last season, Harrell was Alabama's low stroke leader, averaging 73.38 and playing in all 13 of Alabama's tournaments. Bama returns six of its seven golfers who competed last season. The lone loss was a key one, Clint Provost, who made his second U.S. Amateur appearance this past summer. Provost competed in nearly every Alabama tournament for four seasons, playing in a total of 48 for a 73.36 collegiate career stroke average.

With 2005 U.S. Amateur participants Joseph Sykora, Mark Harrell (both sophs) and freshman standout Matthew Swan virtually locked into three lineup spots, Seawell has been trying to determine which players are most likely to round out his five-man lineup.

Harrell was the Tide's best player last year and Swan was a can't miss prospect, but Sykora's emergence has been one of the more encouraging developments.

"Joseph really used his summer to take his game to another level, and he was a great player when he got here," said Seawell. "He put himself into position to become one of the better players in college golf."

Harrell scored nine under par in three rounds to finish third in the tournament, while Swan finished tied for sixth at four under par in his first ever collegiate tournament. Joseph Sykora tied for 63rd (77-74-73/224)

Alabama's three other golfers were sophomore Gator Todd, the son of former Bama quarterback Richard Todd, who finished tied for 40th (70-77-72/219) at six over par; freshman Matt Hughes who finished tied for 52nd (78-71-73/222) in his collegiate debut after a redshirt freshman season in 2005; Max Alverio who competed unnatached, not as a member of the Alabama squad, finishing tied for 52nd carding rounds of 76-73-73/22)

Alabama's returning veterans also include transfer Thomas Hagler who is a senior and played in 13 tournaments last season for a 73.82 stroke average, Dwight Johnson who played in two tournaments, and senior Lance Walker who played in one tournament last season. Thomas Huggins is the other member of the true freshman class.

The big news in Alabama women's golf this year is a new head coach. Mic Potter, one of the nation's most successful women's golf coaches, joined the Crimson Tide athletics family this summer, coming from Furman where he was a Hall of Fame coach. He succeeds Betty Palmer, who retired after having coached her alma mater since 1988.

A 1994 National Golf Coaches Hall of Fame inductee, Potter came to the Crimson Tide after 23 years coaching the Furman women's team, including 10 years during which he served as the Paladin's Director of Intercollegiate Golf.

Potter was attracted by facilities. "The golf facility is state of the art, and the academic building (the newly renovated Bryant Hall) is unlike anything I have ever seen before," Potter said.

He guided Furman to 15 NCAA Championship berths, six top-10 national finishes, including an NCAA runner-up finish in 1987. He also took Furman to an NCAA Regional, every year since the format was put into place in 1993. Potter was named Southern Conference Coach of the Year eight times and led his team to 35 tournament titles, which puts him third among active coaches. The Paladins won 10 Southern Conference Championships since the tournament's inception in 1994.

He coached 16 NGCA All-Americans, eight NGCA All-Scholar Team selections, 38 All-Southern Conference selections, 12 conference players of the year and four conference freshmen of the year.

"Competing in the Southeastern Conference is an appealing prospect," Potter said. "It is kind of a different level from where I've been. And of course the challenge of taking a program that can be one of the best in the country to that level is very appealing."

Bama didn't just get Furman's coach. Two of the top players from Furman transferred to Alabama to stay with Potter. It is likely that Jenny Suh and Sarah Sturm will rank among Alabama's top players this year. Sturm is a sophomore and Suh a junior who was second team All-America as a soph.

Alabama returns seniors Carina Sorensen and Audrey Gale, juniors Amy Middleton and Lisa Andrzejewski, and freshmen Laura Goodwin and Taylor Bunnell. ■

By Jeff Dunnavant

# Taking Fall Advantage

## *Tennis teams use autumn to prepare for spring*

In today's age of collegiate athletics, every sport seemingly requires a year-round commitment to training and most sports consist of no more than a few months of in-season competition. However, when it comes to tennis, the norms are a little skewed. No other collegiate sport competes more often and stays in-season longer than does tennis.

The team tennis portion of the season runs from early January and concludes in late May with the NCAA Championships. But in reality, that's only half of the tennis season. The NCAA allows for a player to play in 25 events throughout the year. This year, the NCAA allowed players to begin fall competition on September 16 and Alabama Men's Coach Billy Pate took full advantage it.

Pate and the Crimson Tide hosted the Crimson Tide Fall Championships from September 16-18 at the Alabama Tennis Center. Twenty teams and close to 100 athletes from across the country competed in the three day event to kick-off the fall season. But because play in the fall is mostly individual, it allows for some unique and unconventional tennis that won't be seen come January.

"We do try different things in the fall," Pate said, "because we know we still have a little time before the team season begins. We want to try to find what is going to work for us in doubles and we make adjustments that we probably wouldn't make normally."

At the Crimson Tide Fall Championships, Pate implemented an unusual style of tennis into the tournament called one-on-one doubles, designed by Ed Krass. In this style of tennis, players are only allowed to play on half the court adjacent to his/her opponent. According to Krass, he designed the one-on-one doubles method to help foster serve and volley skills of today's younger players. Pate implements the technique into his practices almost every day of the year.

"We also do a lot more conditioning and weights in the fall," Pate said, "and we do video analysis every day to help the players see more easily what they can improve on."

The Alabama women get into the mix as well during the fall. The Roberta Alison Classic, named for the tennis pioneer who broke the gender barrier at The Capstone, is played annually at The University of Alabama in early October. Women's Coach Jenny Mainz invites several of the nation's top players to participate and has helped grow the event into one of the larger fall tournaments in the country.

Fall tennis may have its quirks at times, but don't be fooled into thinking it isn't serious. In fact, fall events are just as important to players and coaches as any event in the spring and that's due to two main factors.

First, fall records count towards an individual's overall record and that affects a player's national ranking as well as chance of being selected for the NCAA tournament at season's end. Every September the Intercollegiate Tennis Association releases its preseason ranking, then releases its next ranking in early January based on fall performance.

Second, the first two legs of the college grand slam, the ITA All-Americans and ITA National Indoor Champions, occur in early October and November. Bids are given out by invitation only and are based on ITA rankings.

Tide senior Robin Stephenson, currently ranked number four in the nation, has already received an invitation to participate in both events. A year ago Stephenson won the consolation draw at the ITA National Indoors, but this year she'll attempt to become the first Alabama player to bring home the title. Teammate Ashley Bentley will attempt to play her way into the main draw at ITA All-Americans. Bentley has earned a berth into the qualifying rounds of the tournament and will need to win three matches to reach the main draw.

On the men's side, Joseph Jung, 23-12 a year ago and ranked number 33 by the ITA entering the fall, has already earned a berth into the main draw at the ITA All-Americans. Two other Tide players, Billy Mertz and Javier Bes, await word to see if they'll earn a wild-card into the qualifying rounds. ■

*By Kirk McNair*

# Tough Guy

## *Justin Britt brings something to defense*

Although Justin Britt is an outstanding football player, and in high school was also a four-time champion in track and field, his reputation comes in great part from his prep basketball career. His senior year he was involved in a fight that got him tossed for the season.

And it may be like the reputations of the gun fighters of the Old West. In pre-season Alabama football camp in August there were four fights, not particularly unusual in football practice. Britts were involved in all four of them, Taylor Britt in one and Justin Britt in three.

Buddy Wyatt, who coaches Alabama's defensive tackles, said, "Justin has a little reputation for having a temper, and it will flare up every now and then. I like his intensity as long as it doesn't get a personal foul or a penalty. He brings some toughness to the position, and I like that."

Of more importance than the fights in fall camp was that Justin Britt got a lot of work. His primary competition at defensive tackle, Jeremy Clark, was injured and held out of team work. Britt became the starter a year after having been Clark's back-up.

"I always wanted to start for the Crimson Tide, to hear my name on the PA as the starter," Justin said. But he added that it is important to stay focused, not let the emotion distract him from the job. He said it's the sign of a good player to stay focused on the game plan.

"It doesn't really matter who starts," Britt said. "Last year it was Jeremy and I came in for him. This year it has been me with Jeremy coming in. One has to go out first, but we're both going to play. And the competition is good for us. We push each other and that can only make us both better."

Britt said getting the extra repetitions in fall practice was part of the reason he got off to a good start this year. The other was the playbook. "We kept the same playbook and I retained it pretty well, so I haven't made mental errors."

Britt and Clark are at tackle, while Rudy Griffin, J.P. Adams, and Dominic Lee are at nose tackle. "The positions are totally different, but Jeremy and I learn the assignments for nose tackle as well as three technique (tackle)," Britt said. "Coach (Buddy) Wyatt tests us every week to make sure we can play both. They are both inside positions, but they are different."

Britt said that the defensive linemen realize they "have to make more plays while doing our job. It's more than just push or tying up blockers for others to make tackles. I think we've become a good defensive front. We took it personally that everyone was saying we had good linebackers and defensive backs, but that we weren't good. The coaches have done a good job of teaching us, so the responsibility is for us to make plays."

Justin Britt is 6-4 and ordinarily weighs about 297. But in fall camp that weight could fluctuate. "I'll lose six to eight pounds in a practice," Britt said. "And that's with the trainers doing a great job of re-hydrating us."

After starting the first two games of the year, Britt suffered a subluxation (less than separation) of his shoulder against Southern Miss on second play of the game. A year earlier as a freshman he had injured his foot against Kentucky and missed the Southern Miss game. A piece of bone had broken off in his ankle and had to be removed surgically during the off-season and he missed the first part of spring practice.

Justin is the third Britt brother in Alabama's football program. Oldest brother, Wesley Britt, was a four-year starter who is now at New England in the NFL. Middle brother, senior Taylor Britt, is working at both guard and center for the Tide. Last year they became what is believed to be the first trio of brothers to play at the same time for Alabama.

"We all played in the first game," Justin said. "Wesley was first team at left tackle, I was second team at defensive tackle, and Taylor played at center."

Justin admitted that the thought passed his mind of playing offensive guard as a freshman. "That would have been pretty awesome if we could have had a Britt at tackle, a Britt at guard, and a Britt at center," he said. "But I'm happy to be on defense. It was great just that the three of us were all on the same team together and playing."

He said it was fun to practice against both Wesley and Taylor his freshman year. "We've always enjoyed competing," he said. "I mostly went against Taylor. About the only time Wesley blocked on me was when he came down on a double team, and there was nothing I could do in that situation. He pretty much took care of me in that situation, but I gave him a run for his money."

It was the first time for that to happen in football. While Wesley and Taylor were only a year apart and played on football teams together at Cullman High School, Justin was on the middle school team.

But the three did all participate on the track and field team together as shot put and discus men. "I think the help I got from them is the reason I had a little more success," Justin said. Wesley won the state championship in discus and Taylor was number one in shot. Justin took both titles in both his junior and senior seasons, in 2003 and 2004.

It's never hard to spot a Britt driving around Tuscaloosa. Justin has a tag that says BRIT 50, while Taylor's is BRIT 52. And in the Boston area they may be wondering about that pickup truck with the Alabama tag, BRIT 70.

One of the most dramatic moments in recent Alabama football was Wesley Britt suffering a broken leg against Tennessee in 2003. As Wesley left the game on a medical cart, he shouted encouragement to his teammates and left an indelible mark of courage in the minds of fans watching.. Among those watching were Justin and his parents, sitting in the stands. "I'll never forget how I felt," Justin said. "We went straight to the hospital. He was already in a hospital bed when we got to see him. You hear a lot of people talk about someone close to them as 'being like my brother.' But that was my brother. Wesley had never been hurt, and it was

an emotional time. But he fought through it and came back and is going good now."

Alabama might have had no Britts. After signing with Alabama, Wesley said that he had not grown up an Alabama fan, that he liked Auburn and that he had liked Florida when being recruited. But he ended up at Bama. Taylor signed with Alabama-Birmingham, but transferred to the Tide a few years ago.

By then it was no problem to land Justin. "I wasn't an Alabama fan when they started recruiting Wesley," he said. "But I became a die-hard Alabama fan. And then I hated everyone else."

He tried to keep an open mind about recruiting, although Auburn picked up quickly that he wasn't interested in the Tigers. But Justin camped at Georgia twice and is an admirer of Bulldogs Coach Mark Richt, and he made an official visit to Baton Rouge to look at LSU. "Then I cancelled my visit to Georgia and committed to Alabama," he said.

"Coach (Charlie) Harbison was my recruiting coach at Alabama, but I also talked to Coach (Buddy) Wyatt a lot," he said. "I was being recruited with the Birmingham guys, Simeon (Castille) and John Parker (Wilson) and Curtis (Dawson). Curtis is gone now. We became good friends and all knew we wanted to do something big. And that was win championships. SEC and National championships. We want them."

And, Justin said, "I think we're on track for championships. We all have that mentality. We have great leadership from the seniors, and we also have good leadership from underclassmen. We're a close group. And at Alabama there is always a sense of urgency to get it down now, not wait until next year. We need to do it every year."

Although Justin is just in his second season at Alabama, he said, "It feels like I've been here longer. Of course, I came to Wesley's games. And when I became a prospect, I would come down to practices if I had a day off. My dad liked that, because when practices were closed to everyone else, they were open to prospects and their fathers. He loves to watch practice. So I've been around it a lot."

Justin said he needs to improve "the mental part of the game. I want to be a better student of the game. I didn't have to worry about that in high school, but now I have to study my opponent and study myself. I watch film every day. I also work every day on getting quicker feet and quicker hands."

Britt said he goes to practice early each day so he can get extra time watching video of the previous day's practice. "I want to see what I did wrong before the coaches point it out," he said.

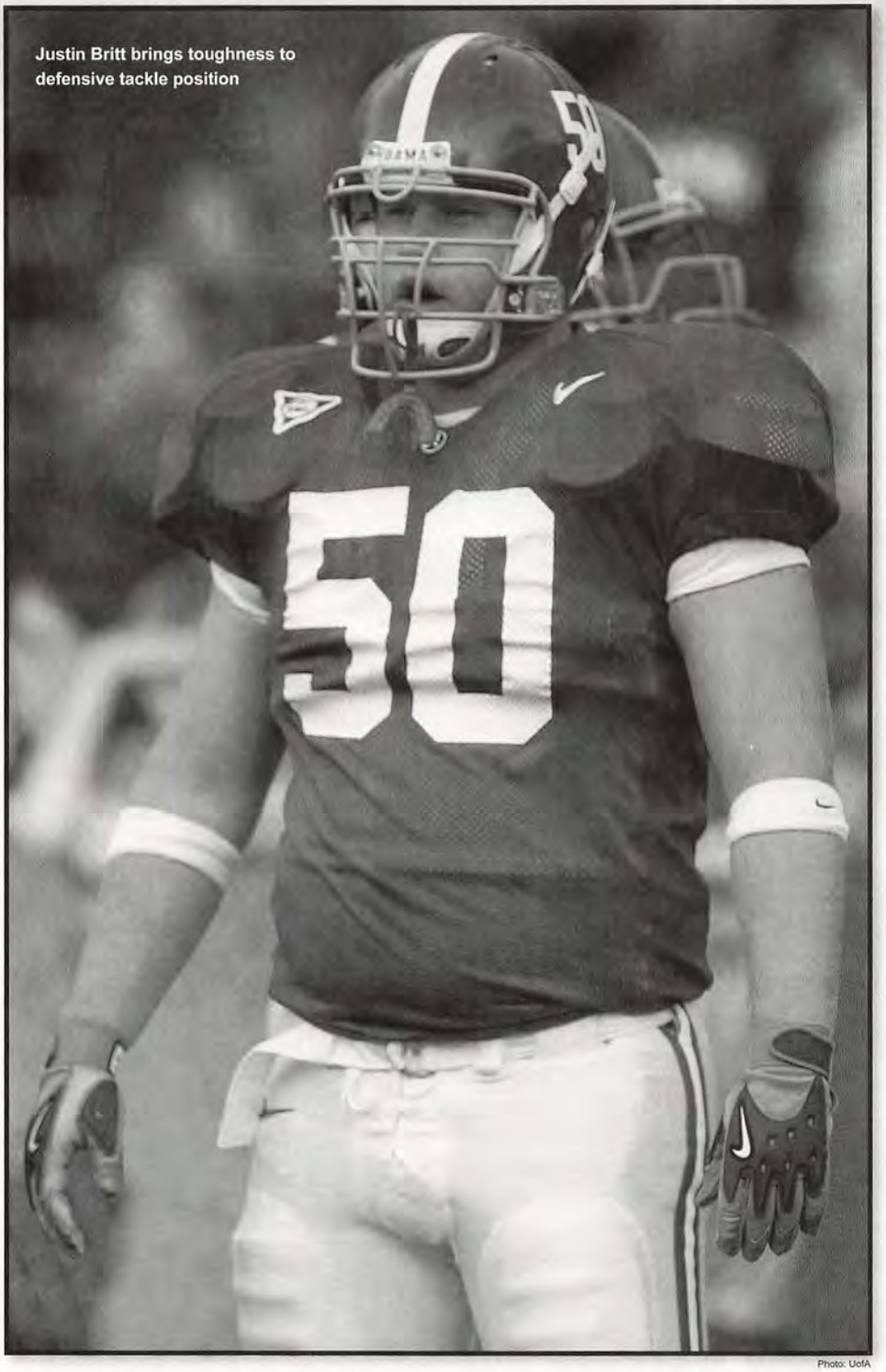
Then he watches the next opponent. "I want to see if someone is doing something with his feet. Does the quarterback use a hard count? What are their tendencies in certain situations? There are a lot of things you can learn."

The business major is also learning off the field. He said he is taking "four hard courses–macro-economics, statistics, computer science, and English."

His coach, Buddy Wyatt, said, "Justin has had to play a lot in his first two years, but he was ready. And he's progressing just fine. He's very intense and very smart, and that allowed him to play early."

Wyatt said Britt "is strong against the run, but needs to continue to improve as a pass rusher."

The coach said, "He's really progressed well in understanding what the other team is trying to do. If you want to be a good football player, you have to be a student of the game. You have to understand how the offense is trying to attack." ■




**Justin Britt brings toughness to defensive tackle position**

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*By Tommy Ford*

# Alabama Family Ties

## *Crimson Tide tradition includes families of players*

In regards to Alabama football, there's the often-used word "family," denoting anyone who has worn the crimson and white on the gridiron. And then, there's literal family–blood kinships of fathers and sons, brothers, uncles and nephews, and cousins galore who can proudly call themselves "family within the family" of Crimson Tide football.

Perhaps no program can claim as many family ties as the University of Alabama, estimated through the years at more than 100….and growing yearly. Although the family names of Croyle, Castille, and Britt may be the most notable present-day offerings, the family tradition at Alabama started in the program's infancy.

The Vandegraaffs, Sewells and Browns were among the early sets of brothers to play for the Tide. Adrian, Hargrove, and W.T. "Bully" Vandegraaff, stretching from 1911-15, were closely followed by brothers Toxey, Joe, and Luke Sewell from 1913-20. The Browns–Johnny Mack, Tolbert, Billy, and Fred–were great athletes from Dothan that helped the Crimson Tide to national recognition in the 1920s. Johnny Mack later became a movie star and a great ambassador for The University of Alabama.

All-America tackle Fred Sington, called by legendary Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne "the greatest lineman in America," contributed two sons–Fred Jr. and David–to The Capstone. In 1958, Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's first season, Fred Jr.'s field goal in the opener provided the first points of the Bryant era. In the same season, David served as Bryant's first team captain. Another 1920s/1950s father-son connection was end Albert Elmore Sr. and quarterback Albert Elmore, Jr.

Alvin "Pig" Davis, a two-year letterman for the Tide in 1937-38 would later send four sons–Tim, Steve, Bill, and Mike–to punt and placekick their way into Tide lore.

Perhaps the most famous Alabama football family, the Hannahs, contributed five to The Capstone–father Herb in 1948-50, his brother Bill in 1957-59, and Herb's sons John, Charley, and David in the 1970s. John, later dubbed by Sports Illustrated as the "best (NFL) lineman of all time," made consensus All-America in football and track and field. David, buried among a sea of bodies, was an unsung hero on the famous goal line stand against Penn State in the 1979 Sugar Bowl.

Ed and Al Lary were famous pass-catching brothers from Northport. More than 50 years later, Al's 10 touchdown receptions in 1950 ranks tops in Alabama football history. Ed Salem (1947-50) and his brother George (1956) later sent to Tuscaloosa sons Jimbo and George Jr., respectively, to follow in their footsteps.

Clell Hobson, Tide quarterback in 1952, would send son Butch to The Capstone, where he played quarterback in the early 1970s. Baseball, though, became Butch's livelihood, as he eventually rose as a player and coach in the major leagues to become manager of the Boston Red Sox in 1992.

Billy Neighbors was a part of Bryant's first recruiting class in 1958, and three years later, part of Bryant's first national championship. Billy's son Wes would come along as a redshirt freshman on Bryant's final team in 1982 and a stalwart center on Coach Ray Perkins' squads in 1983-86. During their playing days, each won the coveted Jacobs Award, signifying the best blocker in the Southeastern Conference. Billy's older brother Sidney (1956-57) and youngest son Keith (1988-90) also donned the crimson and white.

Brothers Gerald, Charlie, and Bruce Stephens each were on national championship squads in the early and mid

Photo: UofA

**Fred Sington, Jr., (left) played in the 1950s while his father was an All-American in the 1020s**

1960s. Mike Ford, Richard Grammer, Robert Higginbotham, and Tommy Wade were solid players for the Tide in the late 1960s, and all four paved the way for younger brothers Steve, Jimmy, Steve, and Steve, respectively, to come along in the early 1970s.

Brothers Gary and Jeff Rutledge were wishbone quarterbacks in the 1970s, and are believed to be the only set of brothers playing quarterback for the same school to win national championships–Gary in 1973 and Jeff in 1978.

Linebacker Woodrow Lowe became Alabama's first three-time All-American in 1972-75, while younger brother Eddie followed a few years later. Eddie played linebacker on Bryant's last team in 1982, and in early 1983 served as a pall bearer at his funeral. The Goode brothers–Chris, Kerry, Pierre, and Clyde–blended speed and athleticism into many wins for the Tide during their careers throughout the 1980s.

George Wilson, whose father Butch was a member of Bryant's 1961 national championship team, continued the Wilson legacy by being an offensive line mainstay on Gene Stallings' 1992 championship squad.

Like the Tide's rich football tradition, the list of Alabama football families goes on, and on, and on, and on…..and, fortunately, with no stopping in sight. ■

*Tommy Ford, director of the University's TIDE PRIDE program, is author of "Alabama's Family Tides," a book about 16 different families of Alabama football.*

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*continued from page 8*

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"This summer, I worked my tail off," he said. "I came in every day, worked hard for two hours, then came in and did extra. And when I went into fall camp, I had a good fall camp. I'm just trying to keep it up through the season."

His hard work showed this fall, when McClain reported for preseason camp at a relatively svelte 249 pounds. That quickly dropped to 242, a weight he is far more comfortable with–and far more powerful at.

"Coach Woods always tells me to work hard, keep your weight down, and that'll make everything better," McClain said. "You'll be better with your plays, you won't be tired as much, your feet won't hurt, your back won't hurt if you get all the (extra) weight off of you."

As a prep star, the most notable part of McClain's game was his impressive statistics. As a junior, he rushed for 1,007 yards and 21 touchdowns on only 135 carries, and added 1,071 yards and 15 scores on 165 carries as a senior.

But he was a halfback at Tuscaloosa County High School under Coach Robert Higginbotham, a former Alabama player himself. As a fullback at Alabama, McClain's rushing skills have been largely an afterthought. Although he does make big scores at times–including a crucial one-yard touchdown pass that sparked a rally near halftime of Alabama's victory over Southern Miss–McClain is far better known for his powerful blocking for Kenneth Darby, Tim Castille and quarterback Brodie Croyle.

And that's just fine with him.

"I love (running), but I've got to do my job," he said. "On the board in the running backs' meeting room, my first job is run blocking and my second job is pass blocking. I've got to run block for KD and Tim, I'll do that; if I have to do it for Brodie, I'll do that. I'm just doing my job–whatever it takes."

McClain still fills a vital role in the Tide goal line offense as part of the "Bama" or "Jumbo" package, blocking for Castille in short-yardage situations.

"He knows exactly what to do," Woods said. "He plays a very important role on our team. That Bama back does so much in setting formations and adjusting formations at the point of attack in the running game."

In Woods' eyes, McClain has a promising NFL future ahead.

"He's, in my opinion, a real prototype pro fullback," Woods said. "He can run with the ball, he's an excellent run blocker and an excellent pass blocker, and he can run with it and catch it."

So what if he doesn't touch the ball much? He'll do the best he can when he does.

"If I get the ball, one time, I'm going to break as many tackles as I can and try to score," McClain said. "Whenever the opportunity comes, I'll do what it takes."

That's all part of being the best. ■

*continued from page 10*

*"I remember the first time I had a bad snap," Lane said. "It stuck with me. I said 'I'm not ever going to let that happen again.'"*

a handful of fairly knowledgeable reporters asked simultaneously, "Who was that?"

"I thought it was (placekicker) Jamie Christensen," one reporter said.

To Lane it just all comes with the territory of playing the most inconspicuous position on the field, and he will say in a heartbeat that he's happy being a relative unknown. The only way he would become a well-known in the sports world would be for a bad snap–just like the only things that would get folks talking about the Sun would be if it didn't rise one morning.

"It's an unsung thing," he said. "I kind of like being out of the spotlight, really. I like the anonymity, just do my job and get out there. I want to be the best at that position and remain unnoticed, I guess you could say."

Lane hasn't determined whether seeking a professional playing career as a long snapper is a viable option, but there is possibly a higher calling for Lane than pro football. Lane is a devout Christian, and he said he will rely on his faith to determine his future if there are any professional opportunities.

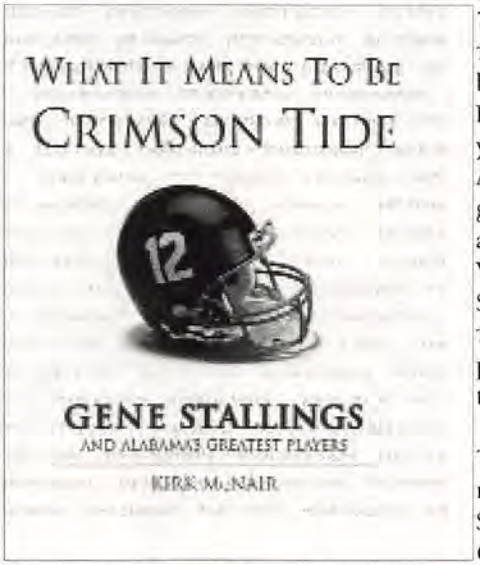
"I wanted to be a nurse anesthetist," he said. "God kind of led me in a different direction and I'm leaning toward biology and maybe even pre-med eventually."

"My main goal was I wanted to be an SEC long snapper. That was always kind of a dream of mine when I first started doing it. If the opportunity arises I'll let God decide for me what's best. But if it doesn't work out I'll go to med school and do my thing." ■

# What It Means To Be Crimson Tide

## Gene Stallings and Alabama's Greatest Players

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us What it means to be Crimson Tide, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of What it means to be Crimson Tide is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.



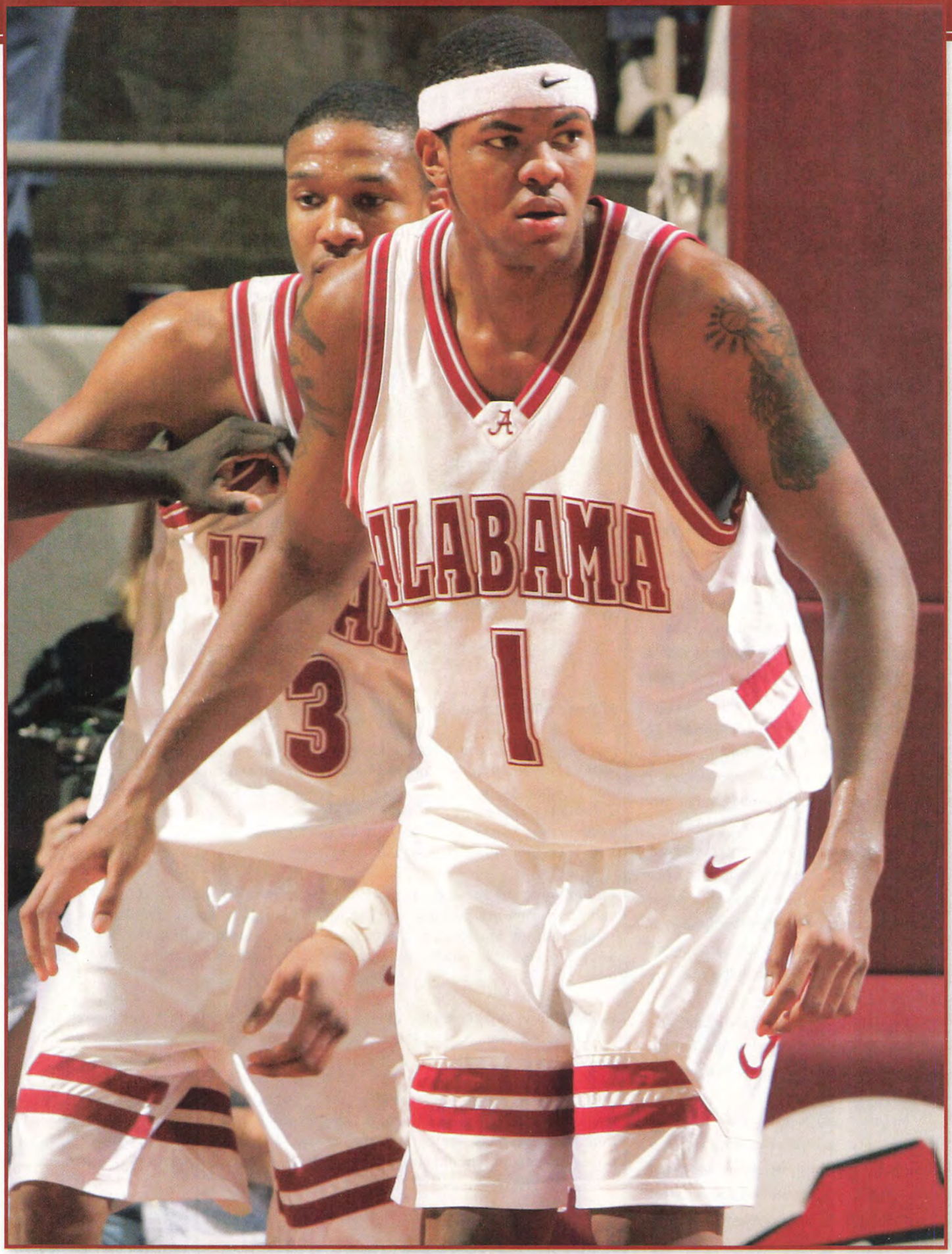

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'Bama Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did *not* become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To pre-order your copy ($27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.


ALABAMA
1
3

By Kirk McNair

# Good News And Bad News

## *Losses mean Bama men's basketball will be different*

There is all sorts of good news surrounding the Alabama men's basketball program. Coach Mark Gottfried's team returns three starters who made the Associated Press All-Southeastern Conference third team. Bama signed two of the nation's top prospects. Bama's basketball home, Coleman Coliseum, will have had $28 million worth of renovation since the end of last season.

But it's impossible to not realize that there could be problems for the Crimson Tide.

Bama lost a first team All-SEC player and a second team All-SEC performer, and Kennedy Winston and Earnest Shelton were the team's top two scorers. Winston, who was All-SEC, averaged 17.9 points per game, while Shelton averaged 16.3.

And Gottfried has to shake his head over Winston's departure. Like so many others have done to their regret, Winston elected to forego his final year of college basketball to try his hand at pro basketball. He may be playing in a very minor league since he was by-passed in the NBA draft.

And while Gottfried has to be pleased to have one of the nation's top-ranked signees in 6-7 Richard Hendrix, it is a major disappointment that junior college transfer Ray George, a 6-3 guard, failed to qualify academically. (For those who hope he may join the Tide later, NBA scouts say he will be in that league next season.)

If ever there was a program in which it has been learned not to wait until next year, it would be Alabama's. The landscape has changed considerably from what might have been expected for Bama basketball this season.

In addition to Winston leaving early and Shelton completing his eligibility, Bama had two other seniors last year in back-ups Jason Reese (he of the monstrous slam dunk against Auburn) and Lucky Williams.

And during or following last season, the Tide saw five players leave the program–forward Akini Adkins, guard Albert Weber, guard Glenn Miles, center Shawn Taylor, and walk-on guard Lakory Daniels.

The result is that Alabama was in pre-season workouts with 10 scholarshipped players (13 are permitted), four of them true freshmen.

As for the transfers, Gottfried said, "Academically we had some guys that weren't performing like we'd like them to, and they're not here. We have to get through this year in the backcourt, and then reload and become a deeper team at the guard position." A feature of Gottfried's Bama teams is that of 17 players who have completed their eligibility, all have earned degrees.

As bad as the losses–graduation, Winston's early departure, transfers, and Ray George's failure to gain eligibility–it could have been worse. Jermareo Davidson, a two-year starter for the Tide inside, but hardly a star player, announced last spring he would explore his options with the NBA.

Gottfried admitted he was surprised. Most national observers considered it ridiculous.

"I was definitely surprised," Gottfried said. "Obviously he made a wise decision to come back. The overwhelming consensus was that he needed to return to college."

There is a downside to Davidson's flirtation with the NBA draft. A player can only declare and then withdraw once. Davidson has now used that withdrawal, which means he can't test the waters again at the end of this season without committing to the draft. That happened last year at LSU. Brandon Bass had declared and withdrawn after his freshman year. Following last season when the SEC Player of the Year declared again, he had to go into the draft. He was a second round choice.

While Davidson has lost his options for this season, there was also something to be gained by his folly. "I think he gained some confidence," Gottfried said. "I think he turned it into a positive."

It wasn't a great year for SEC players declaring for the draft early. Bass was the only one selected by the NBA. Bama's Kennedy Winston had another year of eligibility, but tried for the big bucks that comes with an NBA contract. He's hoping to catch on with an NBA team, but could end up playing in another league, perhaps in another country.

"Most of the pre-season All-SEC Team went out in the draft and then went undrafted," Gottfried said.

Still, he thinks the league will be competitive. "It's an opportunity for young players," he said.

He said he isn't sure who the favorites should be. In the Western Division, he names Alabama, Arkansas, LSU, and Mississippi

Mark Gottfried is preparing for his eighth season

Photo: UofA

State. In the East he expects South Carolina to challenge Kentucky.

"The league is the most wide open since I've been at Alabama."

After making a run to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament in 2004, losing to eventual national champion Connecticut, big things were expected of Alabama last season. And the Crimson Tide didn't disappoint, going 24-8 and tying for the Southeastern Conference Western Division championship with a 12-4 league mark.

But as good as Bama had been in tournament play as a Cinderella team in 2004, the Tide was as disappointing in falling to Milwaukee-Wisconsin in the first round of the NCAA Tournament last March.

That still doesn't change the fact that Bama is among the Big Boys of college basketball, and has been for some time under Gottfried, who will enter his eighth season as head coach at his alma mater.

Gottfried said, "I'd like to think that we are a team that's going to be considered on a national level one of the top teams in the country. We're a team that expects to go to the NCAA tournament. Whether we are good enough or not to, we'll find out, but that's certainly my goal. And I think nationally there is a perception that our team is a Top 20 team year-in and year-out."

Gottfried said, "I think winning the SEC West was an accomplishment that should not be under-appreciated. We had five players make the All-SEC team which was good, and going to the NCAA tournament for the fourth straight year was certainly a positive. Obviously we wanted to go much farther into the NCAA tournament. That should be a goal of this year's team, to do a better job in the postseason, and we have a lot of holes to fill from last year to do that."

Gottfried has been more than a little successful at Alabama, which is one reason he was elevated to Million Dollar Man with a new contract last spring. He has a 142-83 record with the Tide.

So how does Gottfried keep Alabama in contention for SEC and national recognition with the losses from last year's team.

"I'm excited about this year," Gottfried said.

The coach said, "I think the Ray George situation leaves us short-handed. He was a potential starter. He could have been an impact player in our league this year. That leaves us real thin in our backcourt. The loss of Shelton and Winston and then George on top of that changes things for our team a great deal.

"I think this year is going to be one of our biggest challenges. Our front line is experienced, Chuck Davis and Jermareo Davidson. I think we have some young players who will compete for some minutes. And I think Ron Steele is a proven guard in our league. But outside of those guys, we're going to have to have some players step up who haven't been so productive in the past do so this year."

One reason that Alabama has questions is that back-up players didn't get as much quality time as Gottfried would have liked last season. "From a numbers standpoint I think we wanted to have a much deeper team," he said. "I don't know that we accomplished that throughout last season, so I have a lot of questions right now about this team. I'm not

sure how good we can be yet."

The Tide coach said his team will be different without Winston and Shelton. "I think defensively we can be better," he said. "I don't think Ken and Earnest were great defenders. They were more offensive minded than defensive minded. So maybe we can be a little better defensively. But you still have to replace that scoring we have lost. Do we have a guy who can score 36 points against Mississippi State like Earnest did? Probably not. But maybe we can make it up in other areas."

It starts with Chuck Davis. Gottfried said, "Chuck Davis has become a proven player in our league who scores on a consistent basis, and quite honestly, he's the only one returning (who did score so consistently)." Davis, a 6-8, 230-pound senior, averaged 13.9 points, 6.8 rebounds, and 1.9 blocked shots per game

Gottfried said that a good team has to have a great point guard, "and we feel we have that in Ron." Steele, 6-2, 185, averaged 7.9 points per game as a freshman last year, and chipped in with five assists per outing.

Gottfried said, "I think this is a key year for Jermareo Davidson. I think he really needs to step his game up. He's worked hard this summer and we're looking for him to have a much better and more productive year than he's had here in the past.

"I think Jermareo is the first guy that needs to take his game to another level. He and I talked about that all spring, all summer. He has been a starter, but at the same time, last year he scored in double figures just seven times. He needs to be much better this year."

Davidson, 6-10, 213, averaged 7.6 points, 7.9 rebounds, and 1.5 blocked shots per game.

Gottfried said, "And we're looking for Jean Felix (6-7, 205, senior) to be a much better player with the absence of Winston. I think the more minutes he gets, the better player he should be." Felix averaged 5.6 points per game last year, his first at Bama.

Other lettermen back from last year's team are 6-9 senior forward Evan Brock, who averaged 2.4 points and 2.4 rebounds per game, and sophomore wing guard Justin Jonus, who averaged 2.3 points per game.

Gottfried said, "Justin Jonus and Jean Felix have to be ready to play this year. They are going to get an opportunity. I think the more they play, the better they will be. With Shelton and Winston last year, it was hard to give those guys quality minutes. But this year the expectation has to be much higher for them."

The top newcomer is expected to be 6-7, 265-pound forward Richard Hendrix, a Parade All-America last year. He averaged 22.7 points and 14.9 rebounds as Mr. Basketball in Alabama.

Gottfried said, "Hendrix is a low post guy. Especially with the loss of George, we may have to play three post players together without a natural small forward. That's something we'll be looking at."

Gottfried said all the incoming freshmen would have an opportunity to play. They include center Yamene Coleman, 6-10, 220; forward Alonzo Gee, 6-5, 210; and guard Brandon Hollinger, 5-9, 160.

Bama returns one non-scholarshipped player, guard Brandon Davis, and is expected to add one or two other walk-ons for practice purposes.

This season will be a fun one for the program and the fans in that Coleman Coliseum has undergone a major renovation.

"We're excited about the renovations to Coleman Coliseum. I think from a fan's perspective, the game experience will be better from the concourse to the lobbies, and from the seats. From a day-to-day perspective, from the locker rooms to the new weight room, film rooms, offices, all of those things will make our experience better. Mal Moore (UofA director of athletics) has been phenomenal in getting it done, and I think the fans are really going to appreciate it."

Gottfried has succeeded in spite of having one of the nation's most difficult schedules. He said, "I think our schedule is going to be one of the toughest in the country again. The Preseason NIT is going to be a great challenge. Miami of Ohio had an RPI of 36 or 37–they were the highest RPI team not to get into the NCAA tournament last year, and that's who we open up with. Obviously when you look at Memphis, UCLA or Duke, we've got some great opportunities there. And then the rest of our (non-conference) schedule, when you look at playing at Temple, playing at Oklahoma, Notre Dame coming in and N.C. State coming in, again, I think our schedule will be viewed upon nationally as one of the toughest in the country."

Notre Dame will be in Tuscaloosa on December 7 in what will be the dedication game for expanded and remodeled Coleman Coliseum. Fans will see a new club level for pre-game and halftime gatherings for members, all new seats, and expanded concourse areas with additional food courts and restrooms.

"I think it's impressive," Gottfried said. "I think it's going to be exciting for our fans and a great experience for our fans, and a boost for our program. I'm excited about it."

Gottfried added two new staff members, assistant coach Eugene Harris and Director of Operations Matt Parke.

Gottfried said, "We had four years with Orlando Early here, and I thought he did a terrific job in helping our program in a number of ways. Eugene Harris brings a lot to the table. I'm excited about him being on our staff and what he'll bring. And, from a behind-the-scenes standpoint, I think a lot of people may not have realized how valuable Darron Boatright was. We're excited that he's now an assistant athletics director at Murray State University. Matt Parke has an opportunity to really help our program as well and I'm convinced already in the short amount of time that he's been here that he'll do that."

Gottfried retains veteran assistants Philip Pearson and Tom Asbury. ■

By Mitch Dobbs

# High Hopes

## *Smith wants women's basketball playing in March*

It was chaotic when the Alabama women's basketball team had its initial chance to hit the floor with first-year Head Coach Stephany Smith. Smith and her staff were trying to organize the fundamental drills to her complex triangle offense. Bama was limited to only four hours of practice per week.

The up-side of this scene is that it took place in late August as classes started at The University, and not October 14 when the squad was able to begin practice in earnest, the day Smith refers to as D-Day. That day came sixth months and a day after she was officially introduced as head coach to replace retiring Rick Moody.

Alabama conducted a nationwide search and interviewed a number of candidates before deciding on Smith, who seems a natural fit as a coach and recruiter.

The NCAA made a change for the better to its rules in regards to women's basketball this season, allowing institutions to expand what used to be basically one-on-one individual training sessions in the fall. In the past, women's teams were allowed two hours a week on the court in these skill sessions with no more than four players on the court at the same time.

This year players can spend four hours a week on the court, and more importantly, the number of players allowed at those workouts is unlimited.

"So basically, we can start practice," Smith said. Until October 14, those practices had to be wrapped quickly to stick to the four hour per week limit, which is recorded and filed for access by the UA compliance staff.

"They're real eager to know 'How'd we do, Coach?'," Smith said after the first day. "And I'm trying to be as positive as I can be, but I'm totally frustrated because it looked like a Chinese fire drill. I'm very disciplined about the structure of practice and how it really flows. Every drill they learn is new and the terminology is different."

The extra time together with her players should help her team become accustomed to her high expectations, up-tempo style, and a new offense. Smith is certainly trying to make the most out of every second.

"I'm hoping this will play to our benefit seeing that we're putting in an entirely new offensive and defensive system," Smith said. "Not only with 12 new players–new to me anyway–but we have two new coaches as well."

The system Smith wants to implement is one she has dedicated her coaching career to: the triangle offense (made famous by the Phil Jackson/ Michael Jordan Chicago Bulls teams).

"There's going to be a change in system," she said. "There are a lot of people in the country that run parts of the triangle offense. I have a lot of faith in it and I think it allows players the freedom to use their individual talents within a structured system."

Smith's introduction to the triangle came in her last year as an assistant coach at Middle Tennessee, before she assumed the head coaching position. Her predecessor, Lewis Bivins, used portions of the triangle, but everything was a called option.

Stephany Smith is new coach of Alabama's women's basketball

Photo: UofA

"I didn't like the fact that when you came down the court you had to call an option every time, so I wanted to make it more of a reading system," she said. "It intrigued me because of all the things you could do with it, and we were just literally taking portions of it and making them options."

Smith studied more on the offense, using it from time-to-time in her early year's at Middle Tennessee's helm, but she said it was in her fourth year when she decided to live or die with the triangle. She lived.

"My very first year I literally stayed 30 minutes ahead of my team as far as putting the triangle offense in," she said. "The lack of pace in implementing it was as much to do with me figuring out exactly how I wanted to use the

offense. I guess about my fourth year I decided that is what I was going to run, and it is what I was going to run in its entirety.

"Before I had been using the triangle in conjunction with other things, but you can't really run the triangle offense that way. It's a commitment. It has to be part of your transition game. You really have to commit yourself to it and sell your players on it. Everybody has to buy into it to make it work."

Smith emphasized the importance of an active and tenacious defense in integrating the offensive style, and she insists that aggressive and opportunistic defense will become an Alabama trademark.

"Defense has probably always been my biggest emphasis," she said. "We'll run a team system as opposed to a one-on-one system; always have five men guarding the basketball.

"Transition and tempo is dictated almost solely by your ability to defend. We're looking for an opportunity to make easy baskets in transition as often as possible. In the end a game is probably won in a half court setting, but a great advantage is gained by the team who can score the most easy baskets."

That doesn't mean Smith thinks her squads will be pushing 100 point totals in the near future. Smith said her teams will play "as up-tempo as our ability will allow us. Not helter-skelter, not run-and-gun, not Jack 'em up-Joe, just up-tempo–very structured up-tempo."

The question of what the team's ability will allow for in the coming season is not easy to answer. Smith is not a long way down the road to determining who will start, who will come off the bench and what other roles her players will have. What she has been able to get an early read on is the squad's adaptation to the new system.

"I have gathered an impression of how coachable they are," she said, "and about how eager they are to learn and work hard. They have, I think as a whole, been extremely receptive to the change and put their best foot forward."

That process started in summer conditioning workouts, largely under the watchful eye of strength and conditioning coach Steve Martin while Smith and her staff were out on the road recruiting.

"They had done pre-summer testing that they didn't do so hot," Smith said, "but by the post-summer they had all increased not only in strength but in their conditioning and endurance and I think that's when the shell started cracking a little bit. Even though I think they were receptive the entire time it was still a work in progress."

One player Smith will be more familiar with than others is point guard Camilla Blands, who signed with Alabama in June.

The 5-11 point guard from Naerum, Denmark becomes just the third international student-athlete to compete for the Crimson Tide in women's basketball, joining Aycan Yeniley (Turkey, 1993-94) and Rebecca Baragry (Australia, 1997).

"We had a Danish player at Middle Tennessee who made us aware of her," Smith said. "It wasn't like we went over there and evaluated her. We evaluated her by video and had offered her at Middle Tennessee. Several other schools had offered her, and she had chosen not to come to Middle Tennessee. When we made the move to Alabama we went back after her hoping that we would change her mind about where she wanted to go."

How she will make the transition from her Danish league into the SEC is to be determined, of course.

The other Tide newcomer is Harriet Barnes, who signed with the previous coaching staff.

The top returning players for the Tide include three naturally off-guard players: Junior Marverly Nettles, junior Kate Mastin and senior Navonda Moore. Dee Merriweather, who started 28 games at center a year ago, is back for her senior year.

Smith hopes to return Alabama basketball to the excitement of deep NCAA tournament runs it enjoyed in the mid-1990s, and her debut will come in exhibition games on Saturday, November 5 and on the Friday night before the LSU game.

Smith's goals for the 2005-06 team, she said, have never changed from any team she has coached in the past.

"I haven't talked to our team about specific goals, but the season is all about the month of March. I expect us to continue playing in the month of March," Smith said. "I feel like there is a good talent base here. I think with the players we have, if we work on the fundamental skill development, I feel very good about the players that are currently on this team and that we can make them better individually which makes us better as a team."

While focusing on the coming season is the most important object, Smith also has an eye out for the future. Alabama has six scholarships available for the coming class and already has five verbal commitments.

"Not by design necessarily, but the way that it evolved, we have commitments from players that we had recruited all year long as our high-priority recruits at Middle Tennessee, and it just so happens those are the ones that we landed here," Smith said. "They are players that I'm pretty certain we could not have landed at Middle Tennessee, but you still shoot for that.

"The University of Alabama was a very easy sell. It gives me very high hopes for the future and what we will be allowed to recruit once we've had the ability to develop relationships. Women are different from men. Girls are different from guys. As you recruit girls the relationships are so important to them. We want to have the ability to recruit the top 20 players in the country year in and year out. The University and the facilities it provides gives us the opportunity to do just that." ■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# 2005-06 Alabama Men's Basketball Roster

| No | Name | Pos | Ht | Wt | CL | Exp | Hometown (School) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Chuck Davis | F | 6-8 | 230 | Sr | 3L | Selma (Southside) |
| 2 | Brandon Davis | G | 6-9 | 170 | So | 1L | Selma |
| 4 | Brandon Hollinger | G | 5-9 | 160 | Fr | HS | Mobile (LeFlore) |
| 12 | Alonzo Gee | F | 6-5 | 210 | Fr | HS | Palm Beach, Fla. (Dwyer) |
| 21 | Evan Brock | F | 6-9 | 205 | Sr | 3L | Roswell, Ga. (Lassiter) |
| 22 | Ron Steele | G | 6-2 | 185 | So | 1L | Birmingham (John Carroll) |
| 23 | Jean Felix | F | 6-10 | 213 | Sr | 1L | Birmingham (Bevill State) |
| 33 | Jermareo Davidson | C | 6-10 | 213 | Jr | 2L | Atlanta, Ga. (Wheeler) |
| 34 | Yamene Coleman | C | 6-10 | 220 | Fr | HS | Boykin (Camden Wilcox Central) |
| 35 | Richard Hendrix | F | 6-7 | 265 | Fr | HS | Athens |
| 44 | Justin Jonus | G | 6-5 | 210 | So | 1L | Boaz (Douglas) |

HEAD COACH: Mark Gottfried

ASSISTANT COACHES: Philip Pearson, Tom Asbury, Eugene Harris

# 2005-06 Alabama Women's Basketball Roster

| No | Name | Pos | Ht | CL | Exp | Hometown (School) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00 | Chanel Johnson | F/C | 6-3 | So | 1L | Tulsa, Okla. (Edison) |
| 1 | Crystal Bellinger | G | 5-10 | Fr | RS | Manhattan, N.Y. (Patterson) |
| 2 | Marverly Nettles | G | 5-10 | Jr | 1L | Birmingham (Erwin) |
| 4 | Mamie Rutherford | G | 6-1 | Fr | RS | Hatton |
| 5 | Krystle Johnson | C | 6-4 | Sr | 1L | Hoover |
| 10 | Leah Drury | G | 5-8 | Jr | 1L | Greensboro (Southern Academy) |
| 21 | Kate Mastin | G | 5-9 | Jr | 2L | Boaz |
| 33 | Lauren Hill | F | 6-0 | Jr | 2L | New Orleans, La. (De La Salle) |
| 34 | Navonda Moore | G/F | 5-10 | Sr | 2L | Jackson, Miss. (Murrah) |
| 52 | Dee Merriweather | C | 6-4 | Sr | 3L | Hanceville |
|  | Camilla Blands | PG | 5-10 | Fr | HS | Naerum, Denmark |
|  | Harriet Barnes | F | 6-2 | Jr | Tr | Birmingham (Wenonah) |

HEAD COACH: Stephany Smith

ASSISTANT COACHES: Melanie Walls, Saudia Roundtree, Lisa Nuxol

*By Dave Telep*

# Men's Basketball Recruiting

## *Look for an emphasis on guards in next class*

Alabama Head Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried learned over the past few months that the expectations and/or recruiting needs for the following year can be drastically altered by academics, transfers, and the lure of professional basketball. But regardless of what happens with this year's squad, Gottfried knows that he needs to add some guards to the Tide team.

But basketball is a "big man" game, and top inside players are always in demand, particularly with star returnee Chuck Davis a senior this year.

And you have to have wing players, too. Bama lost two starters after last season and at least one projected starter on this year's team is a senior.

Gottfried already has some success in this year's recruiting job. At least two top players–a point guard and a power forward–have already announced intentions of signing with Bama in the early signing period in December.

Mikhail Torrance, a 6-3, 185-pound point guard of Mary Montgomery in Semmes, announced for Bama late last season. He picked Bama over Mississippi State and Florida.

Torrance averaged 18 points and eight assists per game as a junior.

The big man is Avery Jukes, a 6-8, 210-pound power forward from South Gwinnett High School in Snellville, Georgia. He also plays for the Georgia Stars AAU team.

"They saw him play a couple of games on television against Oak Hill and Arlington Country Day and then in Houston," South Gwinnett Coach Roger Fleetwood said. "Then they came in to the school the Monday after Houston, walked in the door and said that the reason they came is because they want him to come to Alabama.

"They saw what Avery's capable of and he fell in love with them," added Fleetwood. "He's an intelligent young man and education is very important to him."

Fleetwood said the interest had really just started to build in Jukes. Miami, Auburn, Purdue and North Carolina State were some of the other suitors.

Jukes averaged 11 points and 11 rebounds as a junior, but the numbers aren't indicative of his talents. There were two other very fine players on the South Gwinnett squad last year.

`"He knew his touches were limited," Fleetwood said. "The only way he'd really score is to go get the ball. People don't know it yet, but he can really shoot the ball. He has great form and great touch. Every time he lets it go, I think it's going in the hole."

One of the top players in Alabama is Stanley Robinson, a 6-9, 212-pound forward at Birmingham Woodlawn. He is ranked the number seven power forward in the nation and is listed as a Top 20 prospect nationwide by Scout.com. He averaged 17 points per game last year.

His top five schools going into this season are Connecticut, Alabama, Florida, Memphis and Georgia Tech. The next step is in-home visits for Scout.com's No. 20 prospect.

"Hopefully, after the in-home visits and the official visits I can have it cut down to two teams," Robinson said. "I'll do my best to try to commit and get everything in time (for the early signing period)."

"We're kicking around some dates, but nothing set in stone," Robinson said. "UConn is a definite. Memphis is a definite, Alabama is a definite and Georgia Tech is a definite. I think pretty much my top five will get official visits but I just don't know when."

Robinson stressed the importance of the in-home visits for him. "Basically, the visits are going to say a lot," he said. "I'm familiar with Alabama of course, and real familiar with Georgia Tech. Florida came up to the school and Memphis came up as well. I spoke to UConn a lot and I'll see the UConn coach when he comes in for the in-home."

UConn has the most ground to make up considering Robinson has never had a face-to-face with Jim Calhoun. "A lot of schools called and offered but they never took the time to see me and visit," Robinson said. "I never got a chance to meet them. With the exception of UConn, I pretty much have met with all the coaches. It's been a process.

"I want to give (UConn) a shot, at least meet the head coach."

So, how does a school make the in roads to land him? "Basically, they need to get me and my mom and my uncle on the same page."

Can he really leave the state of Alabama? "It would be real tough," Robinson said. "Not just leaving the state but they've been there for so long. It would be kind of tough but I'm sure all athletes have to go through the same thing with the in-state schools."

A little known fact about Robinson is that before he was star on the hardwood, he pitched. "I was actually a baseball player when I was growing up," Robinson said. "I wish I would have stuck with it."

Basketball has been pretty good to this freakish athlete who brandishes a mean jump shot, especially to mid-range. The personable Robinson says he's got a couple of pre-visit favorites but he's not talking.

"To be honest, I do have two favorites but I don't want to disclose them. It's not really relevant to say right now. It's not important how you start but how you end."

Jodie Meeks, the number 80 prospect in the nation by Scout.com, is a 6-4, 185-pound strong guard from Norcross, Georgia. He, too, says he is down to five schools. And he plans to visit them all.

It is believed he visited Alabama for the MTSU game. He is also considering Florida, Oklahoma State, Illinois and Notre Dame.

As a junior Meeks averaged 17 points, seven rebounds, and five assists per game.

A gut feeling, he says, will drive his decision.

Geography won't be a factor, Meeks contends. "It's not really that important," Meeks said. "The mileage is not really a factor. I have to see what fits me the best.

"I have to have a good relationship with the coaches."

As for who is pursuing him the hardest, Meeks sees it this way. "I would say all of them (are) but Alabama has been in there since the beginning. Florida is showing a whole lot of interest."

Behind the scenes, the word on the streets says that Alabama and Florida will be in there strong. Bama's Gottfried missed just one of Meeks' games from the spring period through the summer.

The Georgia Hurricanes guard isn't worried much about the decision. He says he'll know when he takes the visits which school suits him best. "It'll feel right when I get there."

Meeks is a talented guard who wants the basketball in his hands. A young man with a strong basketball IQ, he simply makes plays.

Based on public pronouncements, it's hard to get a good feeling for Xavier Keeling, at least from an Alabama standpoint. Keeling is a 6-6, 185-pound small forward at Johnson High School in Huntsville and also plays for the Alabama Lasers. Last year he averaged 17 points and 14 rebounds per game at Johnson.

He said he is a Kansas fan because he grew up in Kansas, but Kansas hasn't offered.

He said he has visited Alabama and Tennessee unofficially.

And he says that playing time is the most important factor in his decision, and that Auburn may be in the lead.

Also a football player, Keeling said he had offers for either football or basketball (his choice) from Tennessee, Alabama, Auburn and Louisville. He intends to play basketball in college.

A year ago no one involved in major college basketball was particularly excited about Jonathan Mandeldove. That was then. Mandeldove's transformation from mid-major steal to legitimate high-major prospect is nearly complete.

Mandeldove almost wound up at Virginia Commonwealth. Last year, the 6-foot-11, 225 pounder signed with VCU, didn't qualify, and subsequently emerged as a high-major prospect.

"I felt that at the time (going to VCU) was a good choice," said Mandeldove, a post grad student at Hargrave Academy. "They are good guys. VCU isn't a bad school but I had some people telling me (I could play at a higher level). Once I figured that out, my dad thought (prep school) would be a good thing."

So far, prep school has been very good to Mandeldove. In fact, basketball in general has treated him well. While hooping with the Atlanta Celtics last spring, the proverbial "light went on" for the center and the rest, well, that's history. Mandeldove has done a lot of growing both as a person and a prospect.

"I just opened up," Mandeldove said. "I felt that I needed to express myself a little more. If I open up people will know me."

People know him now. People like coaches at Alabama, Connecticut, Wake Forest, Pittsburgh, Virginia, Texas, Miami, Memphis, and Missouri.

Mandeldove is in the process of putting the finishing touches on his visit list.

He said, "I just want to feel comfortable that I'm in the right situation. I don't want to hold a spot for someone the next year."

It's not very far from Tuscaloosa to Eutaw in Greene County. But Curtis Nickson, a 6-9, 245-pound center at Greene County High School isn't a name that rolls of the tongue of recruiting junkies. However, the Birmingham Raptors center has a ton of admirers from around the country.

Nickson can't answer the question as to why he's not a household name. From his perspective, he's been playing well since the beginning of his junior season, when his team won the state tournament.

In summer AAU ball, Nickson showed he's a strong bodied guy who can put it away inside and schools are taking notice.

Alabama, Mississippi State, Oklahoma State, Vanderbilt, and Auburn are among those keeping an eye on Nickson, and he's also heard from LSU, Tulane, Ole Miss, Cincinnati, Georgetown, Maryland, Georgia Tech, Miami and a host of mid-major programs.

But, he said, so far he has no scholarship offers.

Verice Cloyd grew up in Gallatin, Tennessee, where he played two seasons at College Heights Christian Academy. He transferred to Southern Maryland Christian to get more national exposure but the program folded, leaving the 6-3 combo guard in a bit of a bind. Cloyd wound up attending Genesis One High of Jackson, Mississippi, where he averaged 17.5 points per game last year. He also played for the Tennessee Travelers, backing up ballyhooed Jamont Gordon.

Victor Evans, head coach at Genesis One, recently told Scout.com national recruiting analyst Jeff Goodman that Cloyd "can really catch and shoot it–and can also create his own shots. He's silky smooth, and everything comes so easy for him."

Because he spent the past year in an obscure high school program and backing up Gordon in AAU ball, Cloyd was relatively unknown until April, when he made some waves at the Real Deal on the Hill tournament in Arkansas. His strong showing surprised a lot of people but not himself.

"I was young," he told Goodman, "so I knew my time would come."

Apparently, his time has arrived. Cloyd, who once scored 40 points in a game against Goodpasture Christian, says he now has scholarship offers from Arkansas, LSU, Mississippi State and Tulane. He says Tennessee and Alabama have begun showing interest, as well.

"I want to go somewhere I can win," Cloyd told Goodman. "That's important to me."

David Booker, 6-8, 215, is a power forward from Moss Point, Mississippi. He averaged 21 points and 11 rebounds per game as a junior.

He says he is hearing from Alabama, LSU, Mississippi State, and Tennessee.

Casey Mitchell, 6-3, 200, is a strong guard at Savannah (Georgia) High School who also plays for the South Georgia Kings. He said he has heard from Alabama, Cincinnati, and North Carolina-Wilmington. ■

*Editor's Note: Other Scout.com publishers contributed to this report.*


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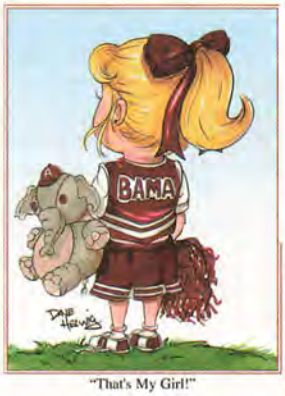

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*By Peter Edmund*

# Fall Ball

## *Wells prepares for record-breaking season*

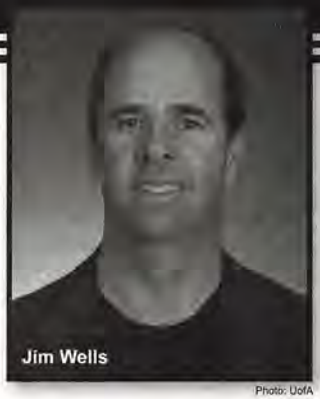
Jim Wells

Photo: UofA

In college baseball, there is no spring training. The season starts in winter. So the training is in the fall, and Alabama Coach Jim Wells started the Crimson Tide fall camp in October at Sewell-Thomas Stadium. Fall ball-watchers need a roster. There are 18 players who were not on the squad in the spring–13 newcomers and five players who redshirted last season.

Four of those newcomers were selected in the 2005 Major League Baseball Draft, but turned down quality offers to attend Alabama. They are: Infielder Alex Avila (18th round, Detroit), right-hand pitcher Tommy Hunter (18th round, Cleveland), right-hand pitcher Jake McCarter (39th round, Washington) and left-hand pitcher Miers Quigley (19th round, St. Louis).

Alabama posted a 40-23 record last season and advanced to the championship game of the NCAA New Orleans Regional before losing to overall number one seed and College World Series participant Tulane. The Crimson Tide has advanced to NCAA Regional play nine times in Wells 11 seasons at The Capstone.

Wells enters his 12th season at Bama with a 478-225 (.680) record in 703 games. He needs 10 wins this season to surpass Dr. Barry Shollenberger as the school's all-time winningest baseball coach. Shollenberger posted a 487-334-1 (.593) record from 1980-94. Overall, Wells is 670-314 (.681) in his 17th year and will coach his 1,000th Division I game this season.

The Crimson Tide will also be looking to replace five everyday starters off last year's team, which included a trio of four-year starters. Despite the losses, Wells is optimistic.

The experience and depth of the 2006 Alabama team is on the mound. The Crimson Tide returns seven pitchers, including junior left-hander Wade LeBlanc, considered to be one of the nation's best. Also back are sophomore right-hander David Robertson and senior right-hander Jordan Davis. The trio combined for 17 wins, 11 saves and 254 strikeouts in 220 innings last season.

Robertson had a stellar rookie season and was a Freshman All-SEC and All-America pick for his efforts. LeBlanc set the sophomore single-season strikeout record (108) and combined with Robertson (105 K) to be just the second duo in UA history to record 100 strikeouts in the same season. Manny Torres and Justin Smith each had 100 or more strikeouts in 1999.

Also returning on the mound are senior right-hander Matt Downs, sophomore right-handers Josh Copeland, Casey Kebodeaux, and Austin Hyatt. Junior right-handers Patrick Kelly and Allen Ponder along with junior left-hander Kenneth Brown were redshirted last year.

The Crimson Tide also has several pitching newcomers.

Junior transfer Bernard Robert was the ace of the staff at Southeastern Louisiana the last two seasons and a freshman All-America selection in 2004. Robert pitched this summer for Youse's Maryland in the Cal Ripken, Sr., Collegiate Baseball League, where he posted a 6-0 record and 0.68 ERA in seven starts.

McCarter had an excellent career at Navarro Junior College and spent some time this summer in the Cape Cod League.

Quigley is a highly touted rookie with glistening credentials. A top prospect following his junior season, Quigley battled injuries as a senior.

Two other talented freshman right-handers–Hunter and Austin Graham –will challenge.

Alabama has three catchers on its preseason roster, but only one with any significant Southeastern Conference experience. Senior Kody Valverde returns for his second season behind the plate. Senior David Ferazza is also back for his third season, mostly in a backup role. Freshman Brian Clark joined the team in August.

The Crimson Tide infield has only two returning starters, but does return the Crimson Tide's top long ball threat from last season as senior Evan Bush returns for his fourth season. Bush has played third base, but could move to first base or possibly be used as the designated hitter.

Junior second baseman Greg Paiml is back for his third year and has been an excellent defensive player. Sophomore Matt Bentley also returns and could provide some power from the left side of the plate. Bentley could play first base or be the designated hitter.

Three newcomers could push for playing time this fall, including Avila, Kent Matthes, and Jeff Texada. Avila, who is a switch-hitter, could also see action in the outfield and on the mound for the Tide. Matthes (6-3, 200) is a talented corner infielder . As a prep senior, he batted .408 with 10 home runs and 31 RBI. Matthes was a prep All-America third baseman.

Matthes played in the same high school all-star game with Alabama shortstop Cale Iorg, who is serving a two-year mission with the Mormon church.

Texada is expected to replace Iorg this season.

Freshmen Wes Henderson, Kyle Moore and John Parker Wilson all redshirted last year. Wilson is not participating in fall workouts as he is the backup to quarterback Brodie Croyle on the Crimson Tide football team.

The outfield returns only one starter from last year's team, junior and two-year starting center-fieler Emeel Salem. He is the leading returning hitter (.277).

Junior Brandon Belcher will miss the fall while recovering from Tommy John surgery. He will not be available to pitch this season, but Belcher can play in the outfield and swing the bat.

Senior Spencer Pennigton also returns and can play either corner outfield positron, first base or designated hitter.

Newcomers Tyler Odle, Ryan Rhoden, and Andrew Rogers will be looking for playing time this fall. Rogers hit over .400 last season at Navarro College and the sophomore is expected to bring power to the line up and is a candidate in right field. Rhoden could also see action at catcher this season.

Rogers (6-3, 215) is a power-hitting outfielder from Navarro College in Corsicana, Texas. In his lone season at Navarro, he batted .406. ■

*By John Hayden*

# Eye On The Series

## *Softball fall work designed to improve team*

While it may not be the "dog days of summer", the fall months represent an important time of year for the Alabama softball program. It is during this time that the Crimson Tide begins its quest for a second straight appearance in the Women's College World Series.

Bama, fresh off its second appearance at the WCWS in three years and its third in the last six seasons, hit the ground running in mid-September and won't stop until the day before finals start in mid-December.

This year's fall season is a crucial one as Coach Patrick Murphy brings in eight new faces to mesh with the 11 returning players off last year's team.

"With eight new people, we want to make sure they know the signals," Murphy said. "They need to know all the defensive plays, the team defensive plays; all the first and thirds, cut-off relays, everything that involves team work. We try to go over that in the fall so when it comes to spring, we're just reviewing. It's the same with offensive plays, like the slap and run and all the things that involve the signals so they can just get in the box and execute in the spring."

Not only will Murphy be breaking in his newcomers, but he and assistant coaches Alyson Habetz and Vann Stuedeman will have the daunting task of determining a depth chart for what will be the largest team in program history.

"We've got a lot of depth this year, so we'll scrimmage a lot," said Murphy. "We're going to see how they do in game situations. We've got a lot of kids that are going to play a position for the first time, maybe an outfielder that's played shortstop all her life or third base. We need to see her in a situation where there's a little pressure."

Patrick Murphy

Photo: UofA

While a lot of what the Tide does takes place on the field, perhaps the most important facet of the fall program takes place in the weight room.

"We lift weights three times a week and run twice a week throughout the whole fall. We give them one break after the last Fall Brawl tournament is over. The off-season is definitely weighted more towards strength and conditioning because the number one priority is the lifting and the softball is second."

The Tide's fall work will culminate with two fall tournaments this year where the team will play four games, the most competition the program has ever had during the autumn months.

"We've got four games, two doubleheaders and we'll have four starting pitchers," said Murphy. "Definitely everybody will play, everybody will start. We don't want to see them in a mop up roll, I want to see them when the pressure is on and see how they respond because you never really know until they get in there and it's 2-2 in the seventh."

Alabama will host four junior colleges in its two tournaments and while many fans would expect the perennial power Tide to roll up the stats against the competition, that's not always the case. Last fall the Tide dropped a 1-0 decision to Wallace-Dothan and was able to scratch only one hit along the way. However, there was silver lining in Blaire Potter, who one-hit the Tide that day. Later that week, Potter was offered a scholarship to pitch for the Tide and she is now one of the eight newcomers.

"It's to the junior college players' advantage to do well against us, because if they can play well against us, they can probably play well against anybody we play," said Murphy. "I'd rather play junior colleges to see if somebody's out there. We don't get many opportunities to see them because we're always playing at the same time."

Bama's fall season opened on September 13 with the first team practice. The first tournament, Fall Brawl I, was scheduled for Saturday, October 8 when the Tide was to host Wallace-Hanceville and Wallace-Dothan. The second tournament, Fall Brawl II, was to take place the following Saturday, October 15, with Jefferson State and Chipola providing competition. ■

By Andrew Bone

# Tide Looks Around

## *Out-of-state big men on Bama recruiting list*

Every good football team has good football players. And the search is always on for big men who can move. For the Alabama Crimson Tide footballl staff, that often means looking out of the state of Alabama. While Bama football success has been built primarily on the use of players developed in the high school programs of the state of Alabama, the very best Crimson Tide teams have had good players from out-of-state.

When Alabama followers think about out-of-state recruiting, the usual thoughts are of Southeastern states, and particularly the border states of Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee. But the Crimson Tide is nationally known, and Alabama's coaching staff is very comfortable going anywhere to talk to prospects and their parents about what it would mean to be a Bama football player.

The skill position players get most of the attention of fans, but the best football teams have outstanding big men–offensive and defensive linemen, tight ends, and linebackers.

Here is a look at some of those big men we have identified as possibly having an interest in Alabama, and in Bama having an interest in them.

### OFFENSIVE LINE

Alex Stadler, 6-6, 300, is from Liberty High School in Bealton, Virginia. Stadler has narrowed his choices to nine schools, and Alabama is one of the college football teams that remains in the hunt for this Scout.com four-star lineman's signature. The Tide has stiff competiition in the recruiting wars, but Bama has a good selling point with playing time available and a history under Coach Mike Shula of being willing to play young offensive linemen. Stadler does not plan to make a decision until after his senior season.

Kiante Tripp may not have Alabama on his list anymore. Scout.com reported Tripp as having committed to Georgia. He is among the top two-way linemen in the South, and Alabama will continue to press the 6-5, 250-pound four-star from Atlanta Westlake. Tripp attended the Tide's senior camp in July. If Alabama can entice Tripp into an official visit, there is a chance, because one of the Tide's top recruiters, Paul Randolph, is working Tripp.

There's no overlooking Lionel Mapp from Green County High School in Greensboro, Georgia. Mapp is 6-5, 370 and moves with great agility. He is a dominating presence on the field, and he performs with a lot of intensity. Despite his remarkable size and talent, Mapp has only received one scholarship offer, and that's from Alabama. Mapp is interested in the Tide, but does not list Alabama as his choice. Georgia is the heavy favorite for the three-star offensive lineman's signature, but if a scholarship offer is not extended by the Bulldogs, the Crimson Tide will have a good shot at landing the big Mapp.

Ryan Broadhead Cory Powers

Photo: Scout.com

Ryan Broadhead is hoping to receive a scholarship offer from the Crimson Tide. Broadhead, 6-6, 270 pounds from Lee County High School in Leesburg, Georgia, has received offers from Eastern Kentucky, Troy, and UAB, but grew up an Alabama fan. The two-star prospect should receive plenty of attention from several college coaches as he blocks for Florida State quarterback commitment D'Vontrey Richardson. If Alabama coaches extend a scholarship offer, don't be surprised to see Broadhead as an instant commitment.

### TIGHT END

Cory Powers, 6-5, 240 pounds from Auburndale (Florida) High School, is looking to have a break-out senior season after missing his entire junior year with a torn ACL. Powers was one of the top tight ends in the state as a sophomore, and possibly one of the top tight ends in the South entering his senior season. But scholarship offers were not on the table when the fall season started as coaches wait to see how his recovery has been. Alabama secondary coach Chris Ball is in charge of Powers' recruitment and plans to see the big tight end in action in the fall.

Richard Dickson, from Ocean Springs, Mississippi, is one of the South's top tight end prospects. Dickson, 6-4, 240 pounds, has received scholarship offers from schools across the country. Alabama was one of the first to extend a scholarship offer, and the Tide made his most recent cut to 10 schools. As a junior, Dickson finished with 500 yards receiving and recorded over 100 tackles from his defensive end position. The three-star prospect by Scout.com does not plan to reach a decision until close to signing day in February.

### DEFENSIVE LINE

Craig Marshall, 6-5, 217 pounds, is an athletic defensive end for Choctawhatchee High School in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Marshall had a productive junior season recording 59 tackles including 16 tackles for loss and five sacks. Marshall has received offers from Alabama, Clemson, Indiana, and East Carolina. The Alabama coaching staff has done well recruiting in the Fort Walton Beach area in the past two years with sophomore wide receiver D.J. Hall and freshman running back Glen Coffee from the area. Marshall and Hall are former teammates and the two have a close relationship. Marshall is very high on the Tide and a commitment to Bama is expected.

Steven Wesley, from Bartow County, Florida, has set an official visit date with Alabama. Prior to his official with the Tide the weekend of the LSU game, Wesley was to officially visit Ohio State and Ole Miss. He has visits scheduled to Florida and Maryland to round out his five visits. Wesley is a 6-2, 235 pound defensive end with a lot of athleticism, as evidenced by his skill as a prep basketball player. Wesley is high on Alabama, but the Tide will have some stiff competition for his signature.

A sleeper prospect in the state of Florida is Markee Drummer 6-4, 220 pounds from Cardinal Newman High School in West Palm Beach. Drummer has flown under the radar, but entering his senior season he has collected offers from Alabama, Central Florida, and North Carolina. As a junior, Drummer recorded 34 tackles with seven sacks. He lists the Tide as one of his favorites, but is keeping an open mind to see if other schools come into the picture during his senior year.

A.J. Jones

Martez Smith

Hunter Haynes

Photo: Scout.com

Other defensive lineman who have mentioned the Tide are McKenzie Matthews, 6-2, 240, Christian Brothers High School in New York; Milton Talbert, 6-2, 225, Hattiesburg High School in Mississippi; and Jon Bell, 6-2, 245, and Greg Greathouse, 6-5, 240, both from Evangel Christian in Louisiana.

## LINEBACKER

Four-star linebacker Bo Harris from Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia, is one of the top linebackers in the South. Harris has collected scholarship offers from Alabama, LSU, Kentucky, and Oklahoma. Harris is an exceptional athlete and plays linebacker, running back, and in some occasions safety for his high school squad. His 6-2, 210-pound frame gives him the ability to convert to several positions on the next level, and he is looking to stay on the defensive side of the ball. Alabama offers Harris early playing time at outside linebacker and the four-star recruit is looking to play early.

A.J. Jones, 6-2, 190, 4.5, linebacker is similar to Brooks Daniels who starred for the Tide several years ago. Though he does not possess great size, Jones makes up with a blend of speed and tenacity. He is a big play-maker, recording 170 tackles with 16 sacks for Middleton High School-Tampa as a junior. The four-star recruit has narrowed his choices to five schools–Alabama, Auburn, Florida, LSU, and USC. Florida has a slight lead for his services, but he is keeping an open mind until his official visits. He plans to take all five official visits after the season, but will make several unofficial trips during the season to observe game-day atmospheres around the SEC.

The Alabama coaching staff is back in Tallahassee recruiting at Lincoln High School. Last year the Tide snagged offensive lineman Cole Harvey from the powerhouse school, and fell just short of landing highly-touted receiver Fred Rouse. The best defensive player on Lincoln's team was Craig Stevens who recorded 140 tackles as a junior. Stevens 6-2, 215, has garnered offers from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Georgia, Florida, Florida State, South Carolina and USC. Stevens claims to be open with his recruitment, but the early favorite is Florida State as Lincoln has built a strong pipeline to Doak Campbell stadium. Harvey may have an influence with Stevens and convince him to leave the state.

Hunter Haynes, from Nease High School in St. Augustine, Florida, is trying to earn a scholarship offer from the Crimson Tide. The 6-2, 225 pound linebacker has received 13 scholarship offers, but is hoping the Alabama coaching staff takes notice of his senior season. In his first two games, Haynes recorded close to 30 tackles with one interception. He had a monster performance against Hoover in the season-opener on an ESPN broadcast. He recorded 16 tackles with two sacks and was trying to send a message to the Alabama coaching staff with his performance. Charlie Kirschman, also a linebacker for Nease, has made a verbal commitment to the Tide.

One of the best pure athletes in the state of Mississippi is Martez Smith 6-0, 205, from Velma Jackson High School in Camden. Smith has 4.5 (40-yard dash) speed to play safety on the next level, but he does have room to grow into an outside linebacker in college. The three-star prospect recorded 139 tackles and added 12 sacks during his junior campaign. Smith has received one scholarship offer, from Southern Miss. He is not naming favorites, but Alabama would be in a great position to sign him if a scholarship offer is extended. He made a trip to Tuscaloosa for the senior camp in July and, he plans to attend several games at The Capstone this fall.

An outstanding pure athlete from Mississippi is Derrick Odom 6-2, 205, from Callaway High School in Jackson. He plays defensive end for his high school squad, and Iowa State, LSU, Ole Miss, and Southern Miss have extended scholarship offers. The four-star linebacker is receiving heavy interest from the Tide, and would like to see Alabama offer a scholarship. Odom plans to take an unofficial visit to Tuscaloosa during the season.

Other linebackers considering Alabama include LaBrandon Glover, 6-1, 215, Pensacola High School in Florida, and a soft verbal to Mississippi State; Antonio Lowrey, 6-2, 210, Christopher Columbus High School in Florida; Morrice Richardson, 6-2, 215, Westlake High School in Atlanta; Roshaad Byrd, 6-3, 210, Meridian (Mississippi) High School; and Toryan Smith, 6-0, 240, Rome (Georgia) High School. ■

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# 2006 Alabama Football Prospects

Here is a list of high school senior prospects from Alabama and also from outside the state who have been linked with Alabama. It should be stressed that this is not Alabama's official recruiting list. This is based on recruiting reports done by the experts at 'Bama magazine and BamaMag.com, including Andrew Bone, Scott Kennedy, and Jamie Newberg. It includes two junior college prospects who have committed to Alabama. Information includes height, weight, 40-yard dash time, and hometown and high school. Those players already committed to Alabama are marked with an asterisk. Signing Day is February 8, 2006.

| NAME | POS | HGT | WGT | 40 | HOMETOWN (SCHOOL) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Earl Alexander | QB-WR | 6-4 | 203 | 4.55 | Phenix City (Central) |
| C.J. Bailey | CB | 5-10 | 180 | 4.6 | Moss Point, Miss. |
| Heath Batchelor | OL | 6-7 | 280 | 5.1 | Haleyville |
| John Bell | DE | 6-2 | 245 | N/A | Shreveport, La. (Evangel Christian) |
| Ryan Broadhead | OL | 6-6 | 260 | N/A | Leesburg, Ga. (Lee County) |
| Chris Brown | RB | 5-10 | 195 | 4.5 | Alexandria, La. |
| Justin Bullard | S | 6-1 | 170 | 4.63 | Millbrook (Stanhope-Elmore) |
| Roshaad Boyd | LB | 6-4 | 220 | 4.8 | Meridian, Miss. |
| *Tremayne Coger | CB | 5-10 | 176 | 4.47 | Columbia, Tenn. (Central) |
| Riley Cooper | WR | 6-4 | 205 | N/A | Clearwater, Fla. (Central Catholic) |
| London Crawford | WR | 6-2 | 186 | 4.55 | Mobile (Davidson) |
| *Andy Davis | S | 6-0 | 200 | 4.45 | Birmingham (Briarwood Christian) |
| Anthony Davis | DB | 6-0 | 195 | 4.6 | Montgomery (Carver) |
| *Preston Dial | TE | 6-4 | 242 | 4.75 | Mobile (UMS Wright) |
| Richard Dickson | TE | 6-4 | 238 | 4.77 | Ocean Springs, Miss. |
| Anthony Dixon | RB | 6-1 | 228 | 4.6 | Terry, Miss. |
| J.D. Douglas | LB | 6-3 | 200 | 4.6 | Prattville |
| Rob Drum | OL | 6-7 | 265 | 5.35 | Birmingham (Spain Park) |
| Randy Dupree | RB | 6-0 | 205 | 4.6 | Attalla (Etowah) |
| Andrew Farr | OL | 6-4 | 295 | N/A | Chatom, Va. (Hargrave Military) |
| Kevin Felder | DB | 5-10 | 170 | 4.5 | Clay-Chalkville |
| *Mike Ford | RB | 6-2 | 205 | 4.5 | Sarasota, Fla. (Hargrave Military) |
| Darryl Gamble | DB | 6-1 | 200 | 4.6 | Bainbridge, Ga. |
| Michael Goggans | TE | 6-3 | 246 | 4.63 | Alexander City (Benjamin Russell) |
| Terry Grant | RB | 5-10 | 187 | 4.5 | Lumberton, Miss. |
| Jacobi Graves | DT | 6-6 | 260 | N/A | Attalla (Etowah) |
| Ross Hagberg | WR | 6-1 | 185 | 4.45 | Chatom, Va. (Hargrave Military) |
| Marquez Hall | DB | 5-8 | 150 | 4.33 | Tuskegee (Booker T. Washington) |
| Bo Harris | LB | 6-2 | 210 | 4.6 | Conyers, Ga. (Heritage) |
| Tim Hawthorne | WR | 6-2 | 192 | 4.65 | Homewood |
| Hunter Haynes | LB | 6-2 | 220 | N/A | St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease) |
| Reggie Hicks | RB | 6-1 | 225 | 4.65 | Madison, Miss. (Central) |
| *Charlie Higgenbotham | LB | 6-0 | 210 | 4.65 | Mountain Brook |
| *Jeramie Holifield | DE | 6-5 | 250 | 4.5 | Hoover (NW Mississippi JC) |
| Maurice Hurt | OL | 6-4 | 344 | 5.7 | Milledgeville, Ga. (Baldwin) |
| Marquis Johnson | DB | 6-1 | 175 | 4.6 | Sarasota, Fla. (Booker) |
| Micah Johnson | DL | 6-2 | 277 | 4.9 | Fort Campbell, Ky. |
| A.J. Jones | LB | 6-2 | 190 | 4.5 | Tampa, Fla. (Middleton) |
| Anthony Jones | WR | 6-0 | 170 | 4.6 | Tallahassee, Fla. (Rickards) |
| *Charlie Kirschman | LB | 6-3 | 225 | N/A | St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease) |

| NAME | POS | HGT | WGT | 40 | HOMETOWN (SCHOOL) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dan Kreamer | DB | 6-1 | 195 | 4.5 | Shreveport, La. (Evangel Christian) |
| J.D. Lott | DL | 6-4 | 215 | 4.6 | Birmingham (Briarwood Christian) |
| Antonio Lowery | LB | 6-2 | 210 | 4.7 | Miami, Fla. (Columbus) |
| Mathew Malouf | QB | 6-2 | 210 | 4.5 | Oxford, Miss. |
| Lionel Mapp | OL | 6-5 | 370 | 5.7 | Greensboro, Ga. (Greene County) |
| Craig Marshall | DE | 6-5 | 217 | 4.7 | Ft Walton Bch, Fla. (Choctawhatchee) |
| McKenzie Mathews | DE | 6-2 | 240 | 4.8 | Syracuse, N.Y. (Christian Brothers) |
| LeSean McCoy | RB | 5-10 | 195 | N/A | Harrisburg, Pa. (Bishop McDevitt) |
| DeAndre McDaniel | WR/S | 6-1 | 185 | 4.5 | Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby) |
| Greg McElroy | QB | 6-3 | 212 | 4.9 | Southlake, Texas (Carroll) |
| *Bryan Motley | OL | 6-2 | 274 | 5.3 | Autaugaville |
| Derrick Odom | LB | 6-2 | 205 | 4.5 | Jackson, Miss. (Callaway) |
| LaValle Parker | WR | 6-0 | 170 | 4.6 | Leesburg, Ga. (Lee County) |
| *Taylor Pharr | OL | 6-6 | 265 | N/A | Birmingham (Shades Valley) |
| Cory Powers | TE | 6-5 | 240 | 4.8 | Auburndale, Fla. |
| Rodney Prince | DL | 6-3 | 230 | 4.7 | Birmingham (Shades Valley) |
| Tim Rawlinson | LB | 6-1 | 215 | 4.65 | Prattville |
| Jermarcus Ricks | OL | 6-4 | 285 | 5.3 | Leighton (Colbert County) |
| Antonio Robinson | WR | 6-5 | 195 | 4.7 | South Pittsburg, Tenn. |
| David Ross | OL | 6-4 | 285 | 5.3 | Homewood |
| Evan Royster | RB | 6-0 | 190 | 4.45 | Chantilly, Va. (Westfield) |
| Chris Smelley | QB | 6-2 | 203 | 4.9 | Tuscaloosa (American Christian) |
| André Smith | OL | 6-4 | 315 | 5.2 | Birmingham (Huffman) |
| Martez Smith | LB | 6-0 | 204 | 4.5 | Camden, Miss. (Velma Jackson) |
| Toryan Smith | LB | 6-0 | 240 | 4.8 | Rome, Ga. |
| Alex Stadler | OL | 6-6 | 300 | N/A | Bealeton, Va. (Liberty) |
| Eugene Sowell | RB | 6-0 | 205 | 4.6 | Birmingham (Shades Valley) |
| *Nikita Stover | WR | 6-1 | 190 | 4.45 | Hartselle (Itawamba, Miss., JC) |
| Milton Talbert | DL | 6-3 | 235 | 4.7 | Hattiesburg, Miss. |
| Tim Tebow | QB | 6-3 | 225 | 4.6 | St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease) |
| Marcus Udell | CB | 5-11 | 180 | 4.5 | Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby) |
| Garrett Utt | QB | 6-4 | 197 | N/A | Atlanta, Ga. (Lovett) |
| Steven Wesley | DE | 6-3 | 235 | N/A | Bartow, Fla. |
| Jared White | WR | 6-1 | 175 | N/A | Mobile (Williamson) |
| Deantwan Whitehead | DL | 6-6 | 245 | 4.7 | Birmingham (West End) |
| Cornelius Williams | WR | 6-1 | 185 | 4.5 | Hoover |
| Donald Williams | DB | 5-10 | 190 | 4.6 | Northport (Tuscaloosa County) |
| Justin Woodall | S | 6-1 | 200 | 4.75 | Oxford, Miss. (Lafayette) |
| Erroll Wynn | RB | 5-10 | 204 | 4.65 | Jonesboro, Ga. (Mundy's Mill) |
| Terrell Zachery | WR | 6-1 | 189 | 4.54 | Wadley |

*By Andrew Bone*

# Committed...Again

## *A look at some who will join Bama football in 2006*

Mike Ford Jeramie Holifield

Photo: Scout.com

One of the stepping stones of the recruiting season is "Commitments." An adage of recruiting watchers has been that "An oral commitment isn't worth the paper it's written on." They are called "non-binding commitments," which is what they are. Nearly every school has had gains and losses from changed minds. Now there are also "firm" commitments and "soft" commitments.

The bottom line is that most who commit to a school stick with that decision, but until the names are on the scholarship papers or the player enters school as a full-time student, there are no sure things.

Alabama has a relatively large number of "commitments" for the 2006 signing class. And they include some familiar names. Many believe that the three most important commitments to date are those from Nikita Stover of Hartselle, Jeramie Holifield of Hoover, and Steve Ford of Sarasota, Florida.

Stover and Holifield were part of the 2004 recruiting class and have spent the past two years in junior college. They are on track to enroll at The Capstone in January and take part in the off-season program and spring practice. Ford was signed last February, but is spending this year at Hargrave Academy in Virginia. He will enter Bama next summer and be a freshman.

Stover was the top player in the state two years ago. The four-star recruit failed to qualify academically and has spent the past two falls at Itawamba Community College in Mississippi. After a sensational freshman year, the Tide commitment is sitting out his junior college sophomore year to concentrate in the classroom and graduate in December. In our last interview with Stover he stated, "I will be down there in December. Everything is straight. I have everything in line to come down there. I finished last year with around a 2.3 (grade point average). It may have been a little bit higher. When I enroll in December, I will have three years to play three."

That means because he did not play this year, this will be his redshirt season and he will be a sophomore in eligibility beginning in 2006.

the 6-2 Stover dominated his freshman year recording 29 receptions for over 500 yards. He is up to 205 pounds. Stover is impressed with the Tide's current stable of receivers, but will bring his own attributes when he arrives. He said, "Everyone is doing a great job. All of those guys make plays. We have a lot of great talent at receiver right now. When I get there, I am a deep ball threat. I am also very physical. When the ball is in the air, it's mine."

Former Hoover defensive end Jeramie Holifield is planning arrive in Tuscaloosa in December. The 6-5, 260-pound defensive lineman was considered one of the top 10 players in the state as a senior in high school.

During his freshman year at Northwest Community College, Holifield recorded 65 tackles and four sacks. Holifield said, "I think I have matured a lot. I have gotten a better feel for the game speed. I have improved on my pass rush and my run stop. When I get to Alabama, I am going to be a leader. I am going to bring everything I have learned in high school and in junior college."

Mike Ford, from Sarasota High School, was on the academic bubble his entire senior year of high school. After failing to qualify, he enrolled at Hargrave Military Academy instead of spending two years at a junior college. In our last interview Ford stated, "I am going to be back at Alabama in December." That may be a bit ambitious. He may not complete his academic work at Hargrave until next spring, meaning he would arrive in Tuscaloosa next summer.

Ford got off to a great start at Hargrave. In his first two games, he rushed for over 150 yards.

Ford was ranked as the second best running back in Florida (behind FSU freshman Antone Smith) after rushing for 2,836 yards and 37 touchdowns as a senior and named Florida's Class 5A Player of the Year.

Those are not the only commitments. Indeed, they are not the only players who are likely to be re-signed.

It is believed that as many as four 2005 signees are "Grayshirts," the unofficial designation of players who are willing to sit out a football season (usually as parttime students at The University, lifting weights and watching tapes on their own), then re-sign again the next year. Last year quarterback John Parker Wilson and offensive lineman Drew Davis were grayshirts.

Those in the 2005 signing class who are expected to be in the 2006 signing class are:

Sam Burnthall, a 6-2, 190-pound defensive back from Decatur; Cole Harvey, a 6-3, 255-pound offensive lineman from Tallahassee, Florida; Travis Sikes, a 6-3, 190-pound defensive back/wide receiver from Nashville, Tennessee; and Patrick Hanrahan, a 6-1, 220-pound running back from Springville.

Others who have committed to sign with Alabama in February, all high school seniors, are:

Tremayne Coger, a 5-10, 176-pound cornerback from Central High School in Columbia, Tennessee; Andy Davis, a 6-0, 200-pound safety from Briarwood Christian in Birmingham; Preston Dial, a 6-4, 242-pound tight end from UMS-Wright in Mobile; Charlie Higgenbotham, a 6-0, 210-pound linebacker from Mountain Brook; Charlie Kirschman, a 6-3, 225-pound linebacker from Nease High School in St. Augustine, Florida; Bryan Motley, a 6-2, 274-pound offensive lineman from Autaugaville; and Taylor Pharr, a 6-6, 265-pound offensive lineman from Birmingham Shades Valley. ■

## Where Are They Now?

# Harry Lee Is Backbone of A-Club

*By Erik Stinnett*

It may be difficult to remember Harry Lee's playing days. After all, the 73-year-old Lee hasn't been in an Alabama football uniform in over half a century. But almost all former Bama athletes are very much in touch with Lee. For the past 39 years, Lee has served as the secretary/treasurer for the A-Club Alumni.

His duties involve keeping an up-to-date database of members for the club's two newsletters each year, collecting dues and filling orders for A-Club plaques, pins, charms and rings. He also works with the athletics department in hosting pregame meals before each home football game in the A-Club Room in addition to planning the annual meeting of the A-Club each spring during A-Day weekend. Then there are the numerous phone calls and e-mails he receives throughout the year from members and others seeking information. For Lee, who receives no payment for his A-Club work, it's truly a labor of love.

"I'm indebted to The University tremendously," said Lee, a Birmingham native. "This is one way I can continue to give back to it. It also keeps me in contact with all eras of athletes who have been at The University. Some of them are even out of the country. We have former athletes all around the world."

While Lee may not be getting paid for his A-Club work, he is appreciated–at least by those who know the time and effort he puts into those duties.

"He's been the backbone of the A-Club for so many years now," former teammate Tommy Lewis said. "We have an outstanding A-Club, thanks to Harry. Everybody respects him and looks up to him. He's a first-class guy."

The A-Club, which was formed in 1955, originally involved only former Alabama lettermen from football, basketball, baseball, and track. But the organization decided to take in lettermen in all men's sports when Paul Bryant, who was athletics director as well as head football coach, put an emphasis on winning the Southeastern Conference All-Sports Trophy. And when women's athletics was added, women letter winners were also accepted. The current mailing list is now approaching 3,000. Managers and trainers are also included, and a few more–including coaches and others who were not Bama athletes–have been taken in as honorary members.

One benefit of the A-Club's move toward more inclusiveness has been the increase in the amount of money raised. The A-Club dues are $50 per person. Of that $50, $20 goes to the Crimson Tradition fund, $20 to the A-Club for its mailing expenses and $10 to the A-Club's Education and Charitable Foundation.

While he enjoys all aspects of his volunteer job, Lee especially loves the annual get-togethers where former teammates from a wide range of eras reunite, catch up on their lives, and exchange old "war" stories.

"They've told some of those stories so long, I think they believe them," Lee joked.

The most challenging of Lee's responsibilities is keeping up-to-date contact information on former Tide athletes. Ex-athletes, however, can do their part to help. As Lee points out, a simple visit to www.rolltide.com and then clicking on the A-Club link under the department section can lead a former athlete through the easy steps of changing any personal information that needs to be changed.

Although he's past retirement age, Lee still holds down a full-time job. Lee has been in the investments and insurance business for 49 years and currently works for AXA Advisors in Tuscaloosa.

Outside of his two jobs, Lee enjoys spending time with wife, Janet, whom he married while at The University of Alabama; their three grown children, all of whom live in-state; and seven grandchildren. A fourth child born to the Lees, Marc, died of leukemia in December, 1967. He was nine years-old.

The loss was devastating to the Lees.

"I didn't start acting like a human being again until 1969," Lee said. "The entire year of 1968 was just a wipeout. It took me a long time to recover, and I think about him still today. He often comes up in my mind. He would be a grown man today, but I still see him in my mind as a little boy."

Curtis Lynch, a friend and teammate of Lee's at Alabama, died in October, 1967, and some words spoken during his funeral helped Lee in dealing with his ensuing grief.

"The preacher that day said, 'Some of us are taken early, some are taken late. We can't understand why. But it's a cycle each of us must complete. We just don't know when we're going to complete it,'" Lee said. "Those words remained in my mind over the next year."

Lee does most of his thinking and reflecting while doing one of his favorite hobbies–yard work. The Lees live on an acre lot in Tuscaloosa, providing plenty of space for all kinds of landscaping and gardening.

"That's my get-away time, my release," said Lee, who often spends three to five hours at a time in his yard. "Nobody bothers me. I don't have a cell phone, and I don't have a car phone. I had a client years ago tell me, 'Think of all the calls you're missing while you're in your car.' I told him, 'That's why I like my car.'"

Occasionally, but not often, Lee will make his way onto the golf course. When he does, it's usually in conjunction with an insurance or A-Club event.

"I don't play enough to form any good habits or to have to break any bad ones," he said. "I'm not a good golfer. People ask me what my handicap is. I tell them, 'I don't have one, but whomever I'm playing with, I'm their handicap.'"

Lee was no handicap to his teammates during his playing days at Alabama. An early high school graduation enabled him to participate in Alabama's spring practices in 1951, and what he discovered out on the practice field was that he was more prepared for college ball than he initially thought.

"I found out they really weren't any different than I was, and I was better than some of them," Lee said.

That became even more evident in the fall of 1951 when Lee, as a freshman offensive guard, began winning all the 100-yard dashes in practice–races that included backs and linemen.

"Harry Lee could fly," Lewis said. "He had great speed."

Lewis wasn't the only one who noticed. Lee

Harry Lee has stayed close to Alabama football through A-Club

Photo: UofA

caught the eye of Alabama's defensive coach, Hank Crisp, too.

"He told me, 'You are a natural born linebacker,'" Lee said of Crisp. "I said, 'Coach, I don't know anything about linebacker.' He said he would teach me. He surprised me by coming over to my dorm that night, and he sat down with me and started telling me what to do. He came over every night for about two weeks, and we would do on the field what we went over in my dorm room the night before."

Lee proved to be a quick learner. In Alabama's third game of the season that year–a 22-20 loss at Vanderbilt–Lee picked off two passes and knocked down another. But what the budding star didn't realize was that linebackers have to help out on run defense, too.

"I had the offensive end man-to-man, and I was covering him well," Lee said. "He was having trouble getting behind me. He couldn't pass me. But half the time, he wasn't going out for passes–he was trying to block me. I was going backwards so fast that he couldn't catch me to block me. Thankfully, we had a good secondary. They were coming up and stopping the run plays because I wasn't doing anything. So the next week, I had to learn the difference between when an end is coming out for a pass and when he's coming out to block. I sat on the bench and watched and learned as Bobby Marlow played the position."

Lee not only learned the nuances of the position, he excelled at them. He still recalls a practice before the Tennessee game in 1952 in which Crisp crafted a unique defense to try and stop the Vols' vaunted single-wing offense. The scheme required that Alabama put its best defender on Tennessee's key offensive player, the strong guard. None of the players knew who Crisp thought was the team's best defender until, after explaining the responsibilities of the position, Crisp called out, "Lee, get in here."

Reminded of that story, Lee said, "Coach Crisp never gave compliments to anybody. He never told you when you were doing well, only when you were doing badly. That was a monumental moment for me and built my confidence tremendously."

Lee remained at linebacker until his junior season when a new rule was implemented that limited a player from going in and out of the game once per half.

"That was a stupid rule," Lee said. "You basically had to go both ways, so then I became a guard again."

The good part about that 1953 season for Lee was that Alabama won its first SEC championship in eight years. Making it even sweeter was the fact that the Tide clinched the title with its 10-7 win over Auburn. What Lee remembers most about that game was the Tide's game-winning drive at the end when the score was 7-7.

"Auburn had a left defensive tackle from Pennsylvania or New Jersey or one of those Yankee states," Lee said. "We'd come out of the huddle and look right at him and say, 'We're coming right at you.' We'd get three, four or five yards at a time, and we were running right at him. And then we'd go into our huddle and come out and say the same thing to him. We told him that every time, and we were picking up yardage and just marching down the field. Finally, he got so upset that he started standing up just as the ball was snapped and would start swinging. Time started to run out so we kicked the field goal and beat them."

That after-glow of winning the SEC was dampened somewhat a few weeks later when Alabama lost to Rice in the Cotton Bowl. Lewis' off-the-sidelines tackle on Rice's Dickie Moegle is what that game is most remembered for.

In 1954, Lee's senior season, Alabama started off 4-1, which included an impressive 27-0 dismantling of Tennessee in Knoxville. Strangely, the Tide's season collapsed after that victory over the Vols. Alabama went 0-4-2 the rest of the way, scoring a total of just 14 points in that final six-game span.

"Tennessee had been national champs in 1951, and after we beat them 27-0 in 1954, we came into the locker room rejoicing, shouting and hollering, and Coach Crisp said, 'You haven't beaten anybody today.' Man, that sort of took the life out of us. Our offense just went away. I can't explain it. We just didn't have any enthusiasm after that."

After graduation, Lee was drafted into the Army and played a year of service ball at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The all-star caliber squad, which featured players from all across the South, drew the attention of several professional teams. One of those teams was the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of the Canadian Football League which signed Lee to a contract. Lee played one year in the CFL before a severe shoulder injury forced him into retirement.

"They had to put a real long pin in my shoulder to keep it together," Lee said. "I said, 'Well, my football career has got to end sometime, and it ends here.' But I really enjoyed it.'"

Lee's shoulder was reinjured a few years later in 1960 while arm wrestling one of Alabama's fullbacks. The calcium deposits that had formed around the screw were broken loose, requiring the surgical removal of the pin.

"But I didn't lose," Lee said of the match. "Nobody lost. It was a stalemate."

Lee, who, at 73 has witnessed more Alabama football and seen more head coaches come and go than most over the decades, likes what he sees from the Crimson Tide today.

"I think we're on the right track," he said. "No school will probably ever have the dominance we had during the Coach Bryant era because the rules of recruiting are so different. But I think we have the right man at the right time. People just need to give Coach (Mike) Shula time because we are still feeling the effects of probation, and we'll still feel it a little bit next year, too. I feel Coach Shula and his staff will bring Alabama back to prominence the way it's supposed to be."

And one of the by-products of a return to national prominence will, no doubt, be a more energized A-Club base. And that suits Lee just fine.

"We can definitely tell," Lee said. "When the football team does poorly, our membership drops. When the football does well, our membership increases." ■

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Harry Lee is one of 62 former Alabama football players who tells his story of "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide," with foreward by Gene Stallings. 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair is author of the book, which is available for $27.95 plus tax (if applicable) and shipping and handling by calling (205) 345-5074. Autograph by Kirk McNair is available.*

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# 'BAMA SCORECARD

## The Catch

For years to come, Alabama football followers will discuss "The Catch," the amazing reception made by junior wide receiver Tyrone Prothro late in the second half against Southern Mississippi in Bama's second game of the year. Southern Miss held a 21-10 lead over Alabama at the time of the play, which was fourth and 12 from the Golden Eagles 43-yard line.

Prothro reached around the defender (who was called for pass interference), grabbed the ball, then held on with the ball squeezed against the defender's back.

It took the replay officials to sort everything out. One on-the-field official had ruled the pass incomplete, while another ruled it a touchdown. Both were wrong, but the replay officials got the ball spotted at the one-yard line.

The catch was shown on television for days and will be talked about and replayed for years.

And in mid-September, Prothro was named the Pontiac Game Changing Performance winner as announced on ESPN during halftime of the Utah-TCU football game. Prothro's acrobatic catch received 69 percent of the votes tallied, running away with the honor. As a result of the award, Pontiac will donate $5,000 to The University of Alabama's general scholarship fund in Prothro's name.

Daniel Moore, the famed sports artist who has chronicled the major events of Alabama football for the past quarter century, has said that he intends to add the Prothro reception to his list of paintings.

## Gottfried In Kuwait

Alabama Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried has been a big hit in American college basketball. This summer he proved to be a big hit internationally. Gottfried was the moving force behind Operation Hardwood or "Hoops with the Troops." It was a double-elimination basketball tournament made up of teams of United States servicemembers from the eight American military camps in Kuwait.

Gottfried talked former and current NCAA basketball coaches into joining him in the operation in August. In addition to coaching the teams, Gottfried and his cohorts–Tom Izzo, Bobby Cremins, Kelvin Sampson, Bobby Lutz, Mike Jarvis, and Dave Odom, along with television analyst Jay Bilas of ESPN–spent time visiting with the troops.

Gottfried was the coach of Camp Navistar for the tournament at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Gottfried said Camp Arifjan is "about the size of Tuscaloosa." It is the largest camp in Kuwait.

"We went over there to support the troops, and yet we were the ones who were continually thanked," Gottfried said. "It felt awkward at times. The troops would come up and say, 'Thank you,' and we would say, 'No, we're here to thank you.' "

Gottfried said, "I now have a completely different perspective on our troops than I had before. I had always been supportive of them, but it's entirely different now. I understand what's happening in the Middle East far better than I ever did.

"Regardless of the political aspect, whether you agree or disagree, everyone needs to know that our soldiers are phenomenal. They have a tremendous sense of dedication. They are there to do a job, and they want to do a good job. They take great pride in what they are doing there."

Gottfried said he met a number of troops from Alabama. "Someone was always coming up to me and saying, 'Coach, I'm from Selma,' or, 'Coach, I'm from Huntsville,' " he said.

A particularly moving experience for Gottfried was watching a convoy form up after the tournament. It was taking some of those same troops he had met and coached back into Iraq. "That really puts things in perspective for you," he said.

## Throwback

This season the Southeastern Conference will hold "SEC Throwback Weekend." Teams from all 12 league schools will face off against one another on the weekend of February 18 wearing retro uniforms. Alabama won't reveal what era it has chosen, preferring to make it more fun by surprising fans with the uniforms. The Tide plays Tennessee for its "SEC Throwback Weekend" matchup. The game will be televised on Jefferson-Pilot.

## Woman Of The Year

Michelle Reeser, a senior All-America on Alabama's 2005 NCAA runner-up gymnastics squad, is a finalist for NCAA Woman of the Year. The representative from the state of Alabama was one of 51 original nominees. In September it was announced that she is one of the 10 finalists for the prestigious national award.

"I'm very, very excited and I have to say a little shocked," the Monroe, Louisiana, native said. "It has put a really nice finish on a great four years at Alabama. I was looking forward to the trip from the start, but being a top-10 finalist makes it all the better.

Reeser, who graduated in June, is an associate in the Birmingham office of the Ernst and Young Accounting Firm. In December she will transfer to the firm's London office. It will be Reeser's second stint working in Great Britain after interning with Deutsche Investment Bank the summer before her senior season.

The 2005 SEC Gymnastics Scholar-Athlete of the Year was to join the 51 state winners, including the other nine finalists, at a banquet held in their honor October 29 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The other finalists include: Alisha Williams, Western State College of Colorado, cross country/track and field; Leah Geib, University of Delaware, field hockey; Melissa Lehman, Barry University, volleyball; Jennifer Skolaski, University of Iowa, swimming and diving; Richelle Simpson, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, gymnastics; Deirdre Dlugonski, Pennsylvania State University, swimming and diving; Janiva Willis, Winthrop University, softball; Lauryn McCalley, University of Tennessee; Lindsay Hagerman, Washington and Lee University, tennis. The NCAA Woman of the Year will be named at the banquet.

"This is a tremendous honor for Michelle, and a well deserved one," Alabama Coach Sarah Patterson said. "She is someone who has worked extremely hard in all aspects of her life. I have always been impressed with how she has dealt with adversity and always came through stronger than before. She is a shining example of what we want this program to represent."

The NCAA Woman of the Year banquet is becoming an annual affair for Patterson and her charges. This is the fourth year in a row that an Alabama gymnast has made the trip. In fact, Reeser is the ninth Alabama gymnast to earn an invitation to the banquet since the award's inception in 1991, and the fourth to be named a top-10 finalist.

In addition to earning All-America honors on the balance beam as a senior, Reeser earned All-SEC on the beam as a sophomore and was part of the 2002 NCAA Championship and 2003 SEC Championship squads. She also helped lead Alabama to three NCAA regional titles.

A four-year Scholastic All-America carrying a 3.96 grade point average in accounting, Reeser was a member of Alabama's Honor Program and a four-time Academic All-SEC honoree. She earned the College of Commerce and Business Administration Scholar-Athlete award as a junior and was inducted into National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Beta Alpha Psi and Gamma Beta Phi honor societies.

"We are very proud of Michelle," Athletics Director Mal Moore said. "She had an outstanding career at Alabama, excelling in both the classroom and the gym. She also never hesitated to lend a helping hand in the Tuscaloosa community."

The Alabama Gymnastics program is the most decorated in the history of the honor. In addition to being the ninth Alabama gymnast to earn the award, Reeser is 11th Crimson Tide athlete to earn the award and the fifth finalist. The other gymnasts to be named top-10 finalists include Meredith Willard (1997), Merritt Booth (1998) and Kristin Sterner (2003) and the state winners are Katherine Kelleher (1992), Dana Dobransky (1993), Lexa Evans (2000), Andreé Pickens (2002) and Stephanie Kite (2004).

"To add my name to this list is amazing," Reeser said. "They were all such outstanding athletes and students and to be included in that group is very much an honor and one that I will always cherish.

## Christian Newton New Tide Assistant Men's Golf Coach

Christian Newton has been hired as Alabama assistant men's golf coach. The announcement was made by Crimson Tide Head Coach Jay Seawell. Newton comes to Bama after serving as assistant coach at Georgia Southern for the past two seasons.

"Christian brings a vast amount of experience from both the coaching and player perspectives," said Seawell. "He's been an assistant at Georgia Southern, a top 15 program, and he was an all-conference golfer. It's exciting to have him on board, and I think he's going to be a great asset to this young team."

Newton is a native of Lyons, Georgia. He was an All-Southern conference golfer at Georgia Southern where he played from 1997-2001, graduating in 2001. He played professional golf on the mini-tour before returning to Georgia Southern as an assistant. He received his Master's degree in sports management in 2003. Last season he helped coach Georgia Southern to a 13th place NCAA team finish and a top 25 national ranking.

producing two All-America players along the way.

## National Rankings

Alabama women's tennis seniors Robin Stephenson and Ashley Bentley garnered national recognition in singles and doubles when the Intercollegiate Tennis Association released its preseason rankings.

Stephenson, ranked number four in the poll, earned the highest ranking ever by an Alabama player while Bentley begins the season ranked number 36. As a doubles team, the duo enters the fall ranked number 21.

"This is a very exciting time for us," Alabama Coach Jenny Mainz said. "Robin and Ashley have both done a tremendous job of leading this team and together they have goals of steering this program into the top 20 and beyond. I'm very proud of the way in which they have represented Alabama."

This is the first time ever that an Alabama player has been ranked in the ITA's top five. Stephenson now holds the six highest national rankings in Alabama history. Previously, Stephenson's high ranking was sixth, set on two separate occasions during the 2005 season. Bentley's previous high ranking, 49th, came in last season's preseason ranking and she has now been ranked in every ITA ranking since March 23, 2004.

## Pre-Season All-America

Jenny Suh, a former All-America at Furman who will compete for the Tide on the links this fall, has been named to the prestigious Golfweek pre-season women's collegiate top 10 list. The list was released in the most recent edition of the magazine. Suh occupies the 10th spot on the pre-season list.

"Certainly, Jenny was one of the top All-Americas coming back from a year ago," new Coach Mic Potter said. "It wasn't a big surprise to me to see her ranked as highly as she was, especially after her performance in the U.S. Amateur this summer. I anticipate another great season for Jenny."

Suh was also featured in a related article in the magazine. The piece discusses her relationship with Potter, who recruited her to Furman and helped her become an All-America. Suh obtained her release from Furman after Potter accepted the head coaching post at Alabama and will compete for the Crimson Tide this fall.

The Fairfax, Virginia, native was a second-team All-America at Furman for Potter last season. She had six top-10 finishes and won two tournaments last season for the Paladins.

Suh won the Southern Conference title as a sophomore and tied for 45th at last year's NCAA Championship. She finished the season ranked 17th by Golfweek and was a quarterfinalist in this summer's U.S. Women's Amateur.

## Record-Settter

When Alabama defeated Nicholls State, 14-0, in a soccer match at the Alabama Soccer Complex on September 16, it was a record-setting night by Libby Probst. Probst set school records for all-time goals (30), points (78) and assists (18).

Probst scored five goals and five assists in the match en route to rewriting Alabama's record books. In addition to becoming the all-time leader in the three major offensive categories, Probst set single-match records for assists (5), goals (5) and points (15) and tied Alabama's record for most goals in a season with 12.

"My teammates were setting me up," Probst said. "They wanted me to get those goals so I have to give credit to my teammates."

"She has a great work rate," Alabama Coach Don Staley said. "She is going to leave a legacy here at Alabama."

But it wasn't just Probst's night to shine. By halftime sophomore Jordan O'Banion collected her first career hat trick. She finished the game with three goals and two assists. This marked the first time in Alabama history that two players collected Hat Tricks in the same match.

## Kretschman Keeps On

Former Alabama standout softball player Kelly Kretschman has been named to the 2005 Women's Pan American Qualifier National team as well as the 2006 National Training team.

The Pan American Qualifier team will compete November 26-December 5 in Guatemala City, Guatemala, at the qualifier tournament for the 2006 World Championships in Beijing, China and the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro. The 2006 National Training team will train together during selected weeks from January- May of 2006.

A four-time All-America while at Alabama, Kretschman has her name written all over the Crimson Tide and SEC softball record books. She helped lead the Crimson Tide to their first ever appearance at the Women's College World Series in the 2000 season.

Kretschman also became the first softball player from the SEC to make the Olympic team.

## Courtney Named to National Pro Fastpitch All-Star Team

It was quite a summer for former Alabama All-America softball catcher Ashley Courtney. Playing for the New England Riptide in the National Pro Fastpitch league, Courtney was named to the East All-Star team. She was batting .377, which ranked second on her team and 15th in the league, and had a .481 slugging percentage.

"I was surprised when I got the call," said Courtney. "This is the point where you realize that you belong in this league. To get to play alongside all these other talented players, many of which are Olympic gold medalists, is simply an honor."

The New York Juggernaut, New England Riptide, and Akron Racers form the East division, and the Chicago Bandits, Texas Thunder, and Arizona Heat make up the West.

Courtney received another exciting summer appointment. When the Boston Red Sox were hosting the New York Yankees in a crucial summer Major League Baseball series, Courtney served as a ball girl for the nationally-televised game from Fenway Park.

Courtney, a two-time All-America while at Alabama, helped lead the Crimson Tide to the Women's College World Series in 2003 and 2005. ■

# 2005 Alabama Fall Sports Schedules

## Football

| Date | Opponent | Site | Central Time/TV* | Series Record |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sept. 3 | Middle Tennessee | Tuscaloosa | *1:30 or 6:00/Fox | Alabama leads, 1-0-0 |
| Sept. 10 | Southern Miss | Tuscaloosa | 6:45/ESPN2 | Alabama leads, 33-6-2 |
| Sept. 17 | South Carolina | Columbia | 2:30/CBS | Alabama leads, 10-2-0 |
| Sept. 24 | Arkansas | Tuscaloosa | *2:30/CBS or 6:00/ESPN | Alabama leads, 9-6-0 |
| Oct. 1 | Florida | Tuscaloosa | *2:30/CBS | Alabama leads, 19-12-0 |
| Oct. 15 | Mississippi | Oxford | *11:30/J-P or 6:45/ESPN2 | Alabama leads, 41-9-2 |
| Oct. 22 | Tennessee | Tuscaloosa | *2:30/CBS | Alabama leads, 43-37-7 |
| Oct. 29 | Utah State (Homecoming) | Tuscaloosa | 2:00/PPV | Alabama leads, 1-0-0 |
| Nov. 5 | Mississippi State | Starkville | *11:30/J-P or 6:45/ESPN2 | Alabama leads, 71-15-3 |
| Nov. 12 | LSU | Tuscaloosa | *2:30/CBS or 6:00/ESPN | Alabama leads, 43-20-5 |
| Nov. 19 | Auburn | Auburn | *2:30/CBS | Alabama leads, 38-30-1 |
| Dec. 3 | SEC Championship Game | Atlanta | TBA/CBS | Alabama 2 wins, 3 losses |

*Time and/or television subject to change

## Volleyball

| Date | Opponent | Time |
|---|---|---|
| Aug. 26 | @ Kansas | 7:00 |
| Aug. 27 | vs. UMKC @ Kansas | Noon |
| | Bama Bash | |
| Sept. 2 | Loyola-Chicago | 12:30 |
| Sept. 2 | Indiana | 7:00 |
| Sept. 3 | Oklahoma | TBA |
| Sept. 6 | @ South Alabama | 7:00 |
| | Wisconsin-Milwaukee Invitational | |
| Sept. 9 | Toledo | 4:30 |
| Sept. 10 | Northern Iowa | 11:00 |
| Sept. 10 | @ Wisconsin-Milwaukee | 7:00 |
| Sept. 14 | Alabama A&M | 7:00 |
| | Birmingham-Southern Challenge | |
| Sept. 16-17 | Alabama, Birmingham-Southern, | |
| | Belmont, Jackson State | TBA |
| Sept. 21 | @ Auburn | 7:00 |
| Sept. 25 | @ Kentucky | 12:30 |
| Sept. 30 | LSU | 7:00 |
| Oct. 2 | Arkansas | 1:30 |
| Oct. 7 | @ Ole Miss | 7:00 |
| Oct. 9 | @ Mississippi State | 2:00 |
| Oct. 14 | South Carolina | 7:00 |
| Oct. 16 | Tennessee | 1:30 |
| Oct. 19 | Auburn | 7:00 |
| Oct. 23 | Ole Miss | 1:30 |
| Oct. 28 | @ Arkansas | 7:00 |
| Oct. 30 | @ LSU | 1:30 |
| Nov. 4 | Florida | 7:00 |
| Nov. 6 | Georgia | 1:30 |
| Nov. 11 | @ Tennessee | 6:00 |
| Nov. 13 | @ South Carolina | 12:30 |
| Nov. 18-20 | SEC Championships | TBA |
| | @ Tuscaloosa | |
| Nov. 23 | @ Ball State | 7:00 |
| Dec. 1-17 | NCAA Championships | TBA |

## Soccer

| Date | Opponent | Time |
|---|---|---|
| Aug. 20 | Sanford (scrimmage) | 7:00 |
| | @ Tulane Invitational | |
| Aug. 26 | @ Tulane | 7:30 |
| Aug. 28 | North Dakota St | Noon |
| | @ New Mexico Tournament | |
| Sept. 2 | @ New Mexico | 7:00 |
| Sept. 4 | Akron | TBA |
| Sept. 9 | UAB | 7:00 |
| Sept. 11 | Troy | 1:00 |
| Sept. 16 | Nicholls State | 7:00 |
| Sept. 18 | Mercer | 1:00 |
| Sept. 23 | @ Florida | 7:00 |
| Sept. 25 | @ South Carolina | 2:00 |
| Sept. 30 | Kentucky | 7:00 |
| Oct. 2 | Vanderbilt | 1:00 |
| Oct. 7 | @ Ole Miss | 7:00 |
| Oct. 9 | @ Mississippi State | 1:00 |
| Oct. 14 | LSU | 7:00 |
| Oct. 16 | Arkansas | Noon |
| Oct. 21 | @ Georgia | 7:00 |
| Oct. 23 | Tennessee | 1:00 |
| Oct. 28 | Auburn | 7:00 |
| Nov. 3-6 | SEC Tournament @ Orange Beach | |
| Nov. 11-28 | NCAA Tournament @ TBA | |

## Men's Cross Country

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| Sept. 10 | Brooks Twilight @ Memphis |
| Sept. 17 | Crimson Classic |
| Sept. 30 | @ Notre Dame Invitational |
| Oct. 15 | Chili Pepper @ Arkansas |
| Oct. 29 | SEC Championships @ LSU |
| Nov. 12 | NCAA Regionals @ Florida |
| Nov. 21 | NCAA Championships @ Indiana State |

## Women's Cross Country

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| Sept. 2 | Belmont Opener @ Nashville |
| Sept. 17 | Crimson Classic |
| Sept. 24 | Pre-SEC @ LSU |
| Oct. 8 | @ Auburn Invitational |
| Oct. 15 | Chili Pepper @ Arkansas |
| Oct. 29 | SEC Championships @ LSU |
| Nov. 12 | NCAA Regionals @ Florida |
| Nov. 21 | NCAA Championships @ Indiana State |

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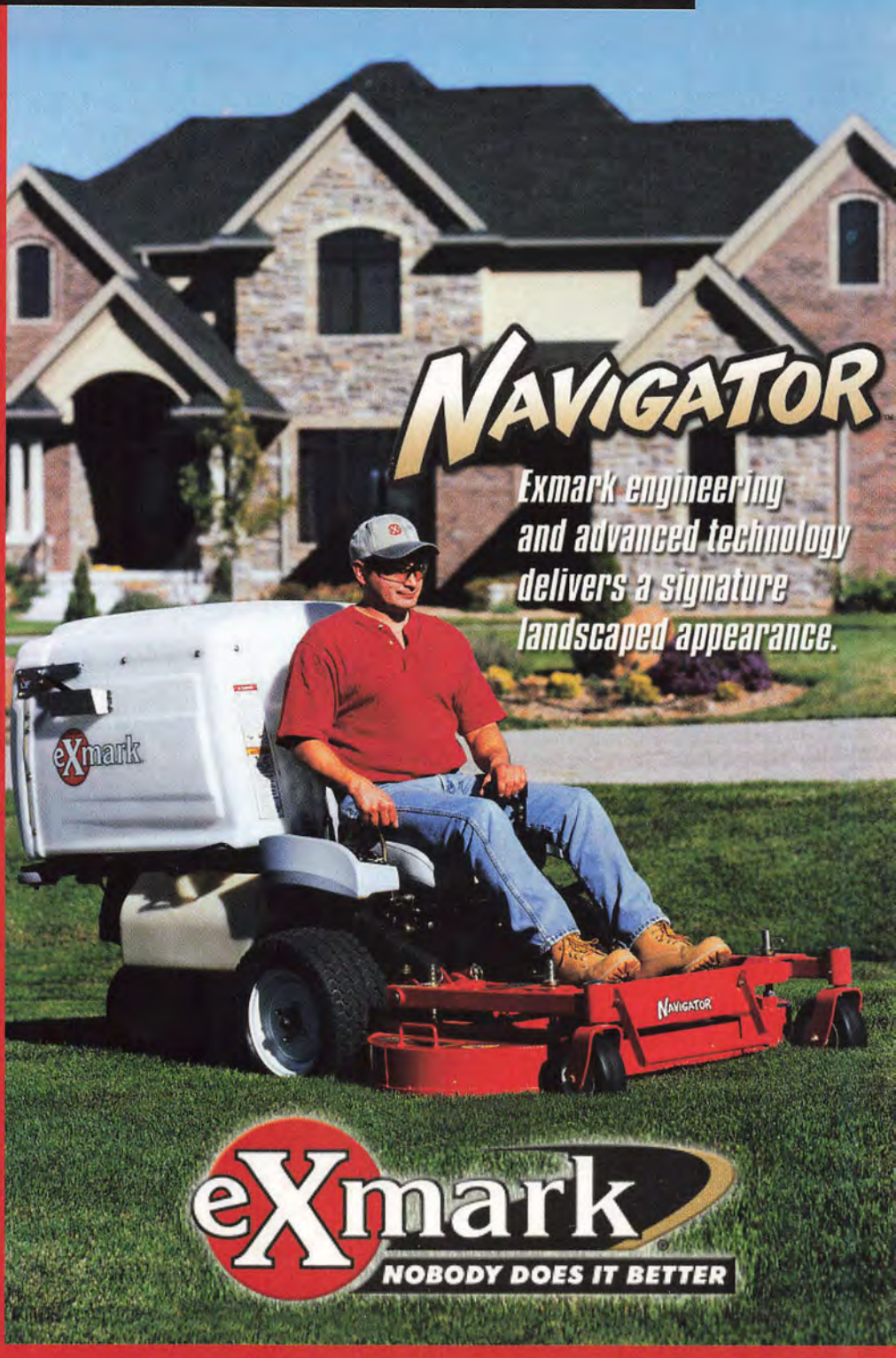


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# 2005 Alabama Winter Sports Schedules

## Men's Basketball

| Date | Opponent | CST Time |
|---|---|---|
| Nov. 10 | Exhibition TBA | TBA |
| PRE-SEASON NIT | | |
| Nov. 15 | Miami-Ohio | TBA |
| Nov. 17 | NIT second round TBA | TBA |
| Nov . 20 | Alabama State | 6:00 |
| Nov. 23 | NIT Semifinals | TBA |
| Nov. 25 | NIT Finals | TBA |
| Nov. 29 | Louisiana Tech | 7:00 |
| Dec. 3 | Winthrop | 7:00 |
| Dec. 7 | Notre Dame | 6:00 |
| Dec. 10 | @ Temple | 4:00 |
| Dec. 17 | Georgia state | 7:00 |
| Dec. 22 | North Carolina State | 8:00 |
| Dec. 27 | Jackson State | 7:00 |
| Dec. 31 | @ Oklahoma | 3:30 |
| Jan. 2 | Birmingham-Southern | 7:30 |
| Jan. 7 | Ole Miss | 5:00 |
| Jan. 11 | @ Auburn | 7:00 |
| Jan. 14 | @ Kentucky | Noon |
| Jan. 18 | Arkansas | 7:00 |
| Jan. 21 | @ LSU | 2:00 |
| Jan. 28 | Mississippi State | 6:00 |
| Feb. 1 | @ Georgia | 6:30 |
| Feb. 4 | LSU | Noon |
| Feb. 8 | Vanderbilt | 7:00 |
| Feb. 11 | @ Ole Miss | 2:00 |
| Feb. 14 | @ South Carolina | 2:00 |
| Feb. 18 | Tennessee | 3:00 |
| Feb. 21 | @ Arkansas | 8:00 |
| Feb. 26 | Florida | 3:00 |
| March 1 | Auburn | 7:00 |
| March 4 | Mississippi State | TBA |
| March 9- | SEC Tournament | |
| March 12 | @ Nashville | |

## Women's Basketball

| Date | Opponent | CST Time |
|---|---|---|
| Nov. 5 | West Alabama | TBA |
| Nov. 11 | Henderson State | 7:00 |
| Nov. 18 | Washington | 5:30 |
| Nov. 21 | Santa Clara | 7:00 |
| PARADISE JAM @ St. Thomas | | |
| Nov. 25 | Virginia | TBA |
| Nov. 26 | Minnesota or Nevada | TBA |
| Dec. 1 | Alabama A&M | 7:00 |
| Dec. 6 | @ Alabama-B'ham | 7:00 |
| Dec. 10 | SE Louisiana | 7:00 |
| Dec. 18 | @ South Dakota State | 2:00 |
| Dec. 20 | @ North Dakota State | 7:00 |
| Dec. 22 | Georgia Southern | 2:00 |
| SOUTH ALABAMA CLASIC @ Mobile | | |
| Dec. 29 | South Alabama | 8:00 |
| Dec. 30 | Southern | 6:00 |
| Jan. 2 | East Carolina | 5:30 |
| Jan. 5 | @ Florida | 6:00 |
| Jan. 8 | Auburn | 2:00 |
| Jan. 15 | Arkansas | 2:00 |
| Jan. 19 | @ LSU | 7:00 |
| Jan. 22 | South Carolina | 2:00 |
| Jan. 26 | @ Auburn | 7:00 |
| Jan. 29 | @ Tennessee | 2:00 |
| Feb. 2 | Vanderbilt | 7:00 |
| Feb. 5 | @ Georgia | 1:30 |
| Feb. 9 | Ole Miss | 7:00 |
| Feb. 12 | @ Mississippi State | 2:00 |
| Feb. 19 | Tennessee | 2:00 |
| Feb. 23 | LSU | 7:00 |
| Feb. 26 | @ Kentucky | 2:00 |
| March 2- | SEC Tournament | |
| March 5 | @ Little Rock | |

## Men's & Women's Swimming & Diving

| Date | Opponent | CST Time |
|---|---|---|
| Sept. 24 | Alumni Meet | 11:00 |
| Oct. 14 | Intrasquad Meet | 5:00 |
| Nov. 4 | Tennessee | 4:00 |
| Nov. 5 | @ Delta State | 4:00 |
| Nov. 18 | @ Auburn | 5:00 |
| Nov. 30- | U.S. Open | All Day |
| Dec. 4 | @ Auburn | |
| Jan. 7 | LSU/Kentucky | 1:00 |
| Jan. 20 | @ Florida/Arkansas | 5:00 |
| Jan. 28 | @ South Carolina/Georgia | Noon |
| Feb. 15- | SEC Championships | All Day |
| Feb. 18 | @ Knoxville | |
| Feb. 19 | Volunteer Invite | All Day |
| Feb. 26 | @ Georgia Last Chance | All Day |
| March 9- | NCAA Zone Diving | |
| March 12 | @ TBA | |
| March 16- | Women's NCAA Championships | |
| March 18 | @ Athens, Ga. | |
| March 23- | Men's NCAA Championships | |
| March 25 | @ Atlanta | |

Schedules for Gymnastics and Men's & Women's Indoor Track and Field will be announced later. Indoor Track and Field competition begins in December and Gymnastics begins in January.

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